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OBERMANN

OBERMANN

BY

ÉTIENNE PIVERT DE SENANCOUR

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL INTRODUCTION BY

ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE

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BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

THE philosophical, descriptive, familiar and, since it must be admitted, sentimental letters which, under the title of *Obermann*, have won for themselves a permanent, if not perhaps a high place in the classical literature of France, and are not unknown in England, though they have not been translated previously, were first published in the early years of the nineteenth century, and are the chief, though not the sole title to distinction of their author, Étienne Pivert de Senancour. Until the year 1897, this writer, as regards his personality, could have been little more than a pleasant, it may be even a precious memory among a later generation in the French world of periodical literature. Elsewhere he was, and still remains, not even a memory. Few books which in modern times have travelled beyond their birthplace[1] have carried with them so slight a vestige of personal history. The edition of *Obermann* which appeared long ago under the auspices of Sainte-Beuve contained the judgment of that distinguished critic on the claims of the work itself and those of some other productions referable to the same hand, but a mere syllabus of information, and that not

[1] Senancour is known and admired in Sweden, Holland and, it is said, in the United States of America. He has also many appreciators in England, and to many men the poems of Matthew Arnold have presented him at second-hand in a kind of transfigured aspect.

entirely correct, concerning the author himself.[1] Later on the book was again prefaced by George Sand, and again, in a longer appreciation prefixed to that edition, which still circulates at a popular price in France, we had the views of another distinguished personality in literature on the subject of *Obermann*, but without one word of reference to its authorship. Here in England we owe, most of us, our first knowledge of Senancour to the admiration of Matthew Arnold, whose two poems, addressed to his memory, have kindled many with affection and curiosity concerning a writer of whom he also had next to nothing to tell us, either in the poems themselves, where information was not to be looked for, or in the long note appended to one of them, which once more contains an appreciation, the briefest but most suggestive of them all. There was, in fact, little to dissuade us from believing that Senancour was other than his letters would appear to show him, the recluse of an Alpine region, who on certain rare occasions put forth strange books of meditation, which, passing from his hermitage into the outer world, had not been altogether lost to the world, but had needed some decades for one of them to take its place and no undue period for the others to pass into oblivion. Sources of information for French readers, it is true, existed, but they were merely the biographical dictionaries or analogous works of reference, which are almost invariably neglected by most readers of literature, and not less by these than by Matthew Arnold himself, or he would never have been in doubt, as he was by the evidence of his poems, regarding the burial-place of Senancour.

In 1897, M. Jules Levallois published at Paris a volume

[1] See, however, the *Portraits Contemporains* of Sainte-Beuve, in the later editions of which there are further biographical particulars concerning Senancour, founded on private documents placed at the disposal of the critic.

of moderate dimensions, entitled "A Precursor: Senancour, with Unpublished Documents," being the result of information which had been afforded him and papers placed at his disposal by the children of Senancour, who were then still surviving. This monograph contains all that we are likely to learn, and its purely biographical information could be reduced within a few pages. In other words, it does not really supplement the biographical dictionaries, except in so far as it corrects, or attempts to correct, a few errors of inference, and its extreme reticence, considering the information which must, one would have thought, have been available,[1] can only be ascribed to a disinclination on the part of his children, or at least of his daughter, towards anything like a life of their father, who seems invariably to have shrunk with extreme sensitiveness from any publicity of that kind. It will be possible, therefore, to dismiss the biographical portion of the present Introduction in a short space. Its interest lies wholly in certain analogies and antitheses between the outward life of Senancour and the inward life which is exhibited so fully and remarkably in his imaginary correspondence, reveries and meditations.

Étienne Pivert de Senancour was the son of a *Contrôleur des Rentes*[2] and was born at Paris in 1770, or twenty-seven years later than Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, with whom, as much by analogy as by antithesis, he connects so strangely, as I shall show in its proper place later on. He came of a Lorraine family, and the village of Senancour is still situated in the department of the Meuse. His childhood has been described as sickly, stay-at-home and wearisome, but, though there is no special reason to challenge the statement, it depends chiefly on the biographical fidelity of *Obermann*

[1] Up to a certain point there is evidence that it was available, for M. Levallois mentions that Mlle. de Senancour did enter into "a certain number of details on the private life, habits and character" of her father.

[2] He was also *Conseiller du Roi.*

and literally reproduces its words.[1] It may be said as a general rule that the biographical dictionaries, if other information failed them, had recourse invariably for their data to the same source.[2] But, as it so happens, the work in question is in more than one respect highly unfaithful from the biographical standpoint. There is no other known source of information, and all reference to the question is omitted by M. Levallois. When the time came for him to be educated, Senancour was placed, in the first instance, with a curé in the vicinity of Ermenville and was sent subsequently to the Collège de la Marche. It was probably, in the main, on account of his state of health and disposition, which did not apparently fit him for more active pursuits, that his father wished him to enter the seminary of Saint-Sulpice as a first step towards the priesthood, but it has also been stated that it was because of his philosophical tendencies—to counteract, in other words, a marked leaning towards the infidelity current at his period. This additional reason is not, of course, rendered specifically improbable because it was obviously an unwise remedy, which sought in a compulsory vocation an antidote to the combined influence of Voltaire, Jean-Jacques and Boulanger. The son in any case rebelled from this parental attempt to set straight his intellectual bias, and, though not assuredly from similar philosophical bias, he is said to have been so far abetted by his mother that she encouraged his flight into Switzerland as a way of escape from the authority and intentions of his father, who, it is further suggested, had otherwise failed to secure the affection of his child.[3] It

[1] Letter XI.

[2] Senancour has himself stated that such analogies may be deceptive.

[3] This impression, and that which has prevailed concerning the relations generally between the father and the son, Senancour in later life showed himself anxious to correct. He characterised them on one occasion as "entirely false."

will be remembered that it is at this period, and under similar circumstances, that the correspondence opens in *Obermann*. M. Levallois, however, places the entire account under question, less, however, by explicit denial than by the simple counter-statement that Senancour accompanied his mother on a visit to the country in question, and he fixes the precise date on August 14, 1789. In any case, Senancour appears to have wandered through the greater part of Switzerland and, following a natural inclination, of which we also hear something in the letters, he seems to have devoted himself to painting, while staying at Charrières, though more as a resource and amusement than with any idea of a livelihood. He must have had means of some kind at the commencement, and it was perhaps when they were on the verge of exhaustion that he drifted into communication with a family, said to have been noble and then living on an estate in the canton of Fribourg. It was here that the first crisis of his life awaited him. One of the members of the Fribourg family was a girl who, like himself, was unhappy and, like him also, was on the verge of embracing a compulsory vocation, which was in her case a distasteful marriage. The lady was Mademoiselle de Daguet, a connection of the Jouffroy family. The point of sympathy which I have indicated was not long before it ripened into intimacy and, though the precise nature of that intimacy has not been stated, Senancour, it is suggested, came to the conclusion that he had compromised her, and as a point of honour rather than as the outcome of affection, despite the bond of their affinity, he married her.[1] He was at this time barely twenty years old, was possessed of no fortune, and had no opportunity of acquiring one during the throes of the French Revolution. Whether he continued to live in

[1] To this story M. Levallois gives no credence, saying that it rests on no evidence. *Mlle. de Senancour haussait les épaules quand on lui en parlait.*

the family of the lady, but if not how they subsisted and where they settled for the time, are points which seem unknown, even to M. Levallois. We are told only that the date of the marriage was 1790, that its subsequent history was not a happy one, and, by others, that it was responsible later on for a distantly similar episode—that of Fonsalbe—which occurs towards the end of *Obermann*. The last point, it may be hoped, is conjectural only, and has perhaps no better foundation than the fact that this imaginary character is also represented as having a son and daughter. The comparison is otherwise unfortunate and not one which we could wish to be instituted by Senancour about a wife who was already dead. It will be remembered that Fonsalbe was induced to contract a marriage, partly on the ground of the affection which a lady was said to have entertained for him by her father and partly from certain considerations which reflect detrimentally on her. Of the alleged analogy M. Levallois fortunately knows nothing, or has concealed it out of consideration for the feelings of his principal informant.

The flight of Senancour into Switzerland, which changed without apparently improving his state of life, and while it saved him from a calling which he disliked precipitated him towards a destiny which seems to have been no less unsuited, had another embarrassing effect upon his future; he was proscribed as an *emigré*, and this proscription meant danger in the event of his return to France. According to the early accounts, he was, however, driven to return, partly by a longing to revisit his mother, whose sympathy had assisted him in his first struggles. M. Levallois, on the other hand, indicates that throughout the Revolution he was continually going and coming between Switzerland and France, to watch over the safety of a heritage which various mischances reduced, nevertheless, to a very small

amount. All authorities are agreed that these visits brought him a great deal of trouble and danger. He was arrested, sometimes on the suspicion that he was a refractory priest, sometimes on the ground of emigration, and it is even said that he was more than once in danger of death.

The next date that it is possible to name in his history is 1796, when his parents appear to have died almost simultaneously,[1] and their loss was followed speedily by that of his wife, who passed away after a lingering complaint. She had apparently no money in her own right, and the estate of his parents which should have come down to Senancour was in the end diverted by the trouble of the time.[2] Thus deprived of resources on which he had counted, he was compelled to renounce permanently the life of solitude and retreat among the Swiss Alps to which disposition and election seem to have alike drawn him. Much against his will, he took up his abode in Paris, at one time in the Rue de la Cerisaie, and thenceforth devoted himself to journalism. I should add that there is some divergence as to the date when this new life began for him. One of the memorials states that after the death of his wife and parents he became still more of a dreamer and still more solitary in his habits. This suggests the return from France to Switzerland which we find in *Obermann*, rather than the boulevards and periodical literature. According to Levallois, Senancour, despite the fact of his marriage, led his accustomed wandering life after the reign of terror, and in 1797 was in the neighbourhood of Senlis, where, at the house of a friend, he wrote the first draft of his *Rêveries*. *Obermann* was begun in Paris in 1801 and terminated in 1803 in the neighbourhood of Fribourg. In any case, the

[1] It seems certain that at this period he was still in Switzerland.

[2] It would seem perhaps to follow from one of his indecisive personal statements that some slight salvage came back to him at long intervals from the general wreck.

change came and it is to the period subsequent thereto that his greatest literary activity belongs. He co-operated in the editorship of *La Minerve Française*, and was on the staff of the *Mercure du 19me Siècle*. He also contributed to *L'Abeille* and *Le Constitutionnel*.[1] Another account represents him as identified with the literary movement of France, chiefly on the Liberal side. In 1828 he contributed to the *Revue Encyclopédique*. He was also one of the editors of Rabbe's *Biographie Universelle des Contemporains*, and it should be noted that the account of Senancour published in this compilation, while it is one of the most appreciative of the contemporary notices which we have regarding him, is also the most reticent and, indeed, completely silent as regards all his private life.[2]

I should mention also that yet another account represents him as not issuing from his solitude till after the Restoration, that is, subsequently to 1814, in which case several of his most important works would have been the product of a second sojourn in Switzerland. This account further states that it was only at a calmer period, namely, when there was no longer danger to the *emigré*, that he took up his abode in France. But the facts are against this view.

The full list of Senancour's works is as follows, one initial publication, not particularised as to title, but described as a failure, being omitted. Its attribution is somewhat legendary and it is unknown to Levallois.

1. "Reveries on the Primitive Nature of Man: On Sensations, on the Means of Happiness which they indicate,

[1] To which he was introduced by Jay, one of the "Hermits of the Chaussée d'Antin."

[2] The author of this notice was M. Vieilh de Boisjolin, to whom also Sainte-Beuve had recourse for biographical information concerning Senancour. The result of this information was that the great critic, then in his youth, fell back for his facts upon *Obermann*, to his inferences from which there is the evidence of Senancour's private memoranda that he frequently took exception.

and on the Social State which would conserve the most of its Primordial Forms," 1798–99. Demy 8vo, pp. xviii., 340. Of this work there are two later editions, the second in 1809 and the third in 1833, the text being subjected on each occasion to very considerable alteration. It would seem also that there was a pirated or forged edition, which is mentioned by M. Levallois, but as to which there are no particulars.[1]

2. *Obermann*, two volumes, 1804.[2] Demy 8vo, pp. viii., x., 384, and 382. Republished with preface by Sainte-Beuve, 1833, and again with preface by George Sand; the last is a posthumous edition, reprints of which are still circulated in France. A considerable portion of the original edition of *Obermann* was transferred to the second edition of the *Rêveries*.

4. "Of Love Considered in the True Laws and in the Social Forms of the Union of the Sexes," 1806. 8vo, pp. xvi., 287. A second edition was published in 1808, with many changes and additions; and a third, with new sub-title and further alterations, in 1829.[3] Fourth edition, 1834.

5. *Valombré*, a play, 1807.

6. "Plain Observations Addressed to the Congress of Vienna by an Inhabitant of the Vosges," 1814. 8vo, pp. 32.

7. "Second and Final Letter from an Inhabitant of the

[1] The reference is perhaps to a pretended second edition, having merely a new title, in which case it would be a device of the publishers independently of the author's sanction, as Senancour on a later occasion repudiated the suggestion in regard to another work and in such terms as would make it impossible to believe that he was a party to the device at an earlier period.

[2] It was issued in three styles: (1) on ordinary paper; (2) *sur carré fin double d'Angoulême;* (3) a few copies *sur papier vélin*. An index of six pages was prefixed to this edition, but it gives no idea of the work and was never reprinted.

[3] This work was attacked bitterly and unscrupulously in the *Gazette de France* and the expostulation of Senancour was inserted only in a mutilated form. There is a full account of this episode to be found in the notes to the second edition of the *Rêveries*.

Vosges on MM. Bonaparte, de Chateaubriand, Gregoire, Barruel, &c.," 1814. 8vo, pp. 36.

8. Two *brochures* published in 1814 and 1815, and respectively entitled "June and July" and "July 14th." 8vo, pp. 8.

9. "On Napoleon during the Hundred Days," another *brochure* published in 1815. 8vo, pp. 16.

10. "Critical Observations on the work entitled 'Genius of Christianity.' . . . Followed by some Reflections on the writings of M. de B (onald) relative to the Law of Divorce," 1816. 8vo.[1]

11. "Free Meditations of an Unknown Recluse, on Detachment from the World and on other Objects of Religious Morality," 1819. Demy 8vo, pp. xx., 432. A second edition appeared in 1830 and a third in 1834.

12. "Summary of the History of China," 1824. Second edition, 1825. 18mo.

13. "Moral and Religious Traditions of various Nations," 1825. 18mo. Second edition, 1827.

14. "The History of Rome." Two volumes. That dealing with the Roman Republic appeared in 1827, and that concerning the Roman Empire in 1828. 18mo.

15. "Isabelle." A series of letters addressed to Clemence, 1833. Demy 8vo, pp. 304.

16. "A Vocabulary of Simple Truths," 1834, being No. 108 of a popular library (*Bibliothèque Populaire*), under the editorship of A. Jasson de Grandsagne.

One of these works, namely, "The Summary of Moral Traditions," brought him for a second time into conflict with authority, but only on the publication of the second edition, when, in the year 1827, he was subjected to a prosecution on the part of the correctional police, because,

[1] A conspiracy of silence was carried on against this tract. No journal of the period was, it is said, permitted to announce it, and its republication, so long afterwards as 1825, was forbidden.

in the work under question, he had spoken of Christ merely as a young man of wisdom. Judgment was pronounced against him with a fine of 300 francs and nine months' imprisonment. This decision was reversed by a superior court on January 22, 1828, apparently to the great joy of the Liberal section of the French press. Senancour's general opinions on matters of revealed religion appear a year later in his contribution, already mentioned, to the *Encyclopædic Review*, being an article on a work of Salvador, relative to the institutions of Moses, in which he agrees with that forgotten writer, who has ceased to be even a name,[1] that as regards the best maxims of morality, there are none in the books of the New Testament which are not found in David, Solomon, Isaiah, or even in the Pentateuch, a criticism from which nothing seems to follow but the imbecility of the period, to which alone it would be possible to suggest, as a point eligible for controversy, that morality began with Christ.

The whole life of Senancour during his residence in Paris, which we may take to have lasted practically from about the year 1803 until his death in 1846, was one of a long struggle with poverty. His works, though numerous, and not entirely without distinction even in his own day, could have attained, in most cases, only a moderate circulation, and there is nothing to suggest that, assuming they paid his booksellers, they could have been a source of any substantial profit to himself. Like the majority of professional authors, whose best work is either above the level of their epoch or is for some other reason confined in its appeal only to restricted circles, he derived most of his subsistence from

[1] Joseph Salvador, Doctor of Medicine of the Faculty of Montpellier, a descendant of one of the Jewish families exiled from Spain by the edict of Ferdinand and Isabella, born 1796, was the author of a work on the "Law of Moses," 1822, and of a "History of the Institutions of Moses and of the Hebrew People," 1828.

what we now understand as hack-work, writing, as I have already indicated, for the press of the day, assisting in the compilation of dictionaries, and, worst of all, because of the labour that it must have involved, undertaking single-handed the manufacture of historical treatises. There is evidence to show that his poverty and constriction were for long a very bitter experience, because at the opening of his life he had every reason to suppose that he would be more tenderly dealt with by fortune. In the end he is said to have become resigned to his straitened ways, though for one moment, as we learn from his latest biographer, he dreamed of some material activity, which, curiously enough, seems to have connected itself with the idea of following Napoleon into Egypt.

In spite of his practical obscurity, he appears to have had many acquaintances, if not friends, among literary men perhaps more distinguished than himself at their period, though his own work has now survived most of them. It would appear that the Legion of Honour was ultimately conferred upon him,[1] though the cross itself never came into his hands. He was a candidate in 1832, and on several later occasions, for election as a member of the Academy of Moral Sciences, and he was actually for a considerable period associated with a minor body termed the Historical Institute. He was acquainted with Vinet, George Sand, Benjamin Constant and Sainte-Beuve. He owed something to assistance from these names, and it was possibly such literary rather than political influence exercised in high places which ultimately obtained for him a government pension, the amount of which, however, has not transpired. If we may believe that, as a result of this annuity, he was relieved to some extent from the necessity of journalism, such advantage was, it may be feared, counterbalanced by considerable suffering towards the close of his life.

[1] This was in 1841, on the occasion of the baptism of the Comte de Paris.

Though some doubt is cast upon the point by Levallois,[1] all earlier biographers agree in saying that during the whole period of his residence in Paris his health was more or less bad, which fact the panegyrists of the biographical dictionaries assign to two causes—firstly, his early devotion to the very strong white wine of Le Valais, and, secondly, a fall, together with a long immersion in an icy torrent. Such authority as may be held to inhere in *Obermann* exists in that work for both explanations, which must be taken for what they are worth. Senancour died at St. Cloud on January 10, 1846, having, it is said, previously lost the use of his limbs through successive attacks of an aggravated form of gout. One of the informants of Levallois alludes to his special desire that no priest or minister belonging to any of the official communions should be called to his death-bed, but other authority, outside his general intellectual tendencies, does not exist for the statement.[2] His portrait was published in *L'Illustration* on January 31, and the obituary notice which accompanies it describes him as small in stature, refined of feature, with an air of distinction and youth which he preserved to the most advanced age. He had a broad, open forehead and fair hair of fine texture.

Senancour left two children, as already mentioned, a son and daughter. The son followed a military career, and the daughter, named Eulalie, long acted as the secretary of her father, and wrote subsequently a variety of unimportant stories designed, I believe, for the amusement of children, besides doing various journalistic work.[3]

[1] "The weakness of his later years has been much exaggerated," and his pedestrian exercises at the age of sixty-eight are mentioned in this connection.

[2] M. Levallois seems to reject it implicitly when he says that such a detail was never alluded to by either of the children of Senancour at any of their numerous conversations.

[3] A romance entitled *Pauline de Sombreuse* and *Bertrand ou la Conquêtomanie*, a satire against Napoleon, are cited by Levallois. They are unknown rather than forgotten.

Such, briefly, was the life of Senancour, and it justifies the statement made at the beginning, that, apart from any title to consideration which will be found in his writings, it is devoid of special features of interest. We cannot expand its outlines so that it shall exceed the common struggle for subsistence in the common life of letters, and it was enringed by the interests, and hampered by the tendencies, of one of the most soulless periods in the history of modern times. Its few interests do not escape from the charge to which the epoch is open. A somewhat pusillanimous flight, or at least departure, to escape a calling which the fugitive did not reject because it had fallen from its high estate, and for which at its best he was infinitely unfit; a silly connection, perhaps even a squalid liaison; an unhappy and mismanaged marriage; the humble life of a journalist embedded in the disenchanting traditions of 1815 and *circa;* these are not titles to consideration or remembrance, and if it can be shown that the Senancour who wrote *Obermann* and the "Free Meditations" was really nothing more than the Senancour who was in agreement with Salvador; who was prosecuted by the correctional police; who compiled mournful historical sketches of China and Rome, interspersed with moral reflections and designed to be useful; who, in fine, drank the white wine of Le Valais and died of the gout—then to translate *Obermann* would be more inexcusable than to have written it in 1804, because we have now means of knowing better. It is my intention, however, to show that there was a Senancour who did not appear on the boulevards or in the *Mercury of the Nineteenth Century*, though, in many respects, he may be said to carry a not less deplorable baggage than the wallet of Judas Iscariot. At that best, however, he was exotic to his period; he was, in fact, a man of vision, and he belongs at his best to eternity.

Before proceeding further it may be deemed desirable, in the interests of the reader, who is probably unacquainted at first hand with *Obermann*, and knows nothing of Senancour otherwise than by uncertain report, to put on record, as a kind of credentials, what has been said of him, both in and out of his own country, by a few distinguished personalities who were familiar themselves with *Obermann*, and at least within certain limits came to regard it, like the writer of this notice, as a note-book or ordinal of a soul errant on its way unguided through the world of life and time, but, amidst all darkness, wavering, circumambulation and unrest, still looking only towards eternity, and in that darkness and in that doubt realistically conscious of the Infinite. There will be no need to go far in search of such witnesses, nor yet to multiply the evidences, and perhaps under the circumstances the plainer way will be to take an unpretentious course and give simple quotations. Matthew Arnold says that "The profound inwardness, the austere sincerity, of his principal work, *Obermann*, the delicate feeling for Nature which it exhibits, and the melancholy eloquence of many passages of it, have attracted and charmed some of the most remarkable spirits of this (the nineteenth) century. . . . The stir of all the main forces by which modern life is and has been impelled, lives in the letters of *Obermann;* the dissolving agencies of the eighteenth century, the fiery storm of the French Revolution, the first faint promise and dawn of that new world which our own time is but now more fully bringing to light—all these are to be felt, almost touched, there. To me, indeed, it will always seem that the impressiveness of this production can hardly be rated too high."

Sainte-Beuve describes Senancour as a pupil of Rousseau, but original and transformed. Of *Obermann* he says that it responds only vaguely to the author's biography, but

fully to his psychology. Of the work itself he says that it is "the true type of the moral situation of which *Réné* represents a moment only, and that in an idealised manner." And again, in the *Portraits Contemporains*, (*tom.* i.), he describes it as "profound rather than beautiful," and as "the book of the suffering majority of souls, their desolating history, their mysterious and uncompleted poem." Then of the author, in *Chateaubriand et son Groupe*, he says: "M. de Senancour lived as a man of conscience and of virtue; he has not reaped glory, but he has had friends; he has had admirers, few, secret, but devoted after their manner and impassioned; he has his secret posterity, which will remain faithful to him."

The destiny depicted in *Obermann* is described by George Sand as majestic in its misery and sublime in its infirmity. Its highest and most permanent value consists in its psychological data, and it is principally from this point of view that it should be examined and interrogated. "Granting, as regards its standpoint, that the descriptive and lyrical beauties of his poem are frequently troubled by the intervention of philosophical discussions or worldly cynicisms, the natural gaiety of his character, the august recollection of his most habitual thoughts, soon inspire new hymns which are unequalled for austere piety and wild grandeur."

In the last resource it may be doubted whether any of these criticisms do more than touch upon the fringe of the real issues which transpire in the consideration of Senancour and the particular revelations which are made to us in those of his works which have been singled out from much that is regrettable and more that is futile as containing the message and secret romance of his inmost soul. The English critic dwells upon the sentimental aspects and the circumstances of the period which made *Obermann*

possible as a production of the human mind. Sainte-Beuve hints at one source of intellectual derivation, and adds what is true enough, but is not all nor even the greatest part of the truth, namely, that the book is the history of the growth of a mind. The important point about *Obermann* is that it is a soul recounting its experiences, recording its speculations and registering its questionings in the valley of the shadow. George Sand reduces this large view within the dimensions of a curt metaphysical statement couched in technical phraseology which is too bald to convey a suggestion, and then falls back upon a literary criticism, which, for the rest, is extremely true and must be almost obvious to any reader. The brief citations I have given will not less carry their full weight, if only in the scales of the ordinary mind, because they are quoted in connection with names which are of those that have power to dispense and sometimes to withhold reputations. There are others that might be mentioned, and perhaps one or two whose judgment would be more to the real purpose, but enough has been indicated for the present object, and it will be permissible to pass on at once to the direct consideration of the true questions that are at issue.

In the first place, as regards the intimate connection which has been established, partly from the paucity of other materials and partly following the lead of at least one illustrious critic, between Senancour as he lived in the world and the hero of *Obermann* as his outward and inward natures are depicted in the book. *Obermann* must not be regarded as the biography of its author, but rather as an event in his development. Some of its incidents are, however, explained naturally by circumstances in his outward life. One is inclined, indeed, to speculate as to why, seeing that the analogies are in certain respects so close, there were other modifications introduced which remove it, without

assignable reason, from the drift of his personal history. The most considerable and obvious distinction consists in the fact that *Obermann* is presented as a celibate, while Senancour at the age of his hero was already married —hastily, unwisely and unhappily. The reason for this principal distinction may perhaps, however, be discerned. *Obermann* is to some extent circumstanced as Senancour, at the period when he wrote it, could have wished to be. Amidst all his weariness, his dejection, his disillusion, doubtless equally dejected and disillusionised, Senancour could have wished his own lines cast, as they were not, at least permanently at the period when *Obermann* was written, in the same uplifted, lonely places and the same modest ease of circumstance. He may not at that time have been actually working on the press for his bread, for, as already seen, and following his private memoranda, *Obermann* was written in 1801 at Paris,[1] and in 1802 and part of the next year at Fribourg.[2] But he knew that Paris, to which he returned permanently about 1803, was his destination, that journalism was his destiny, and that thenceforth he could transfer himself merely in imagination to Saint-Saphorin, to Le Valais, to Vevey, living the life of a recluse and a contemplator of the ages, yet possessed of what to him would have been the purse of Fortunatus, namely, a modest competence, an income secured to him yearly. Now, as he dreamed thus of financial ease, so I fear that the unhappiness of his married life, fully demonstrated in the only life which we have of him, led him also to picture, as something comparatively desirable, the celibacy of a young man at the same time yearning for companionship, intimacy and love. As indicated already, other departures are less easy to account for, but there would be no purpose in

[1] At the Hotel Beauvais.
[2] Or, more exactly, at Agis in that neighbourhood.

enumerating them here; the only point that is of importance to establish is that *Obermann* is the spiritual history of Senancour,[1] the life of his soul laid bare, and this is also its pre-eminent title to consideration and the valid ground for offering it to English readers without abridgment. It must be confessed, as will be seen subsequently, that it contains many perishable elements, and not a few which are, indeed, long since dead. It is, notwithstanding, a great book of the soul, and this is not less its true and proper description, nor is it spiritually less valuable, because it is a book of the soul in darkness, a darkness broken by flashes of strange light fitfully, a darkness not wanting the permanent scintillation of far stars in the zenith, and palpitating through the height and breadth with the sense and sadness of the Infinite. One of the chief purposes of this introduction is to show that this spiritual darkness of Senancour, as it is made palpable to us in *Obermann*, was at length kindled or infiltrated by a certain morning light, in a later composition, and this in such a way as to make it past all doubt that he did at length enter into a measure of the possession of the day.

It may be advisable at this point to correct one error of appreciation to which I believe that some currency has been given, less in the criticisms of *Obermann* which have appeared in books or periodicals, where no one has been sufficiently serious to concern themselves in any careful analysis, than in an unwritten impression prevailing among the admirers of Senancour who are not professed critics. The letters are not, as sometimes supposed, to be taken, nor are they perhaps even in the intention of the author altogether designed to be taken, as the unpremeditated outpourings of a genuine correspondence. There are certainly

[1] M. Levallois has made a careful tracing of certain sensations and deas personal to Senancour through the original *Rêveries*, and has met with them again in *Obermann*.

several passages which could be quoted in support of this view, but they appear, I think, merely as the notion of a moment and are not really borne out by that which precedes or follows them. Even giving full credit for the general fact that the guise of such a correspondence is on the whole tolerably carried out, it is still, as needs scarcely be said, not to be taken seriously. Senancour was discoursing to himself of himself and of his own mystery and of the enswathing mystery of outward things. If there are parts here and there that possess the unpremeditated accent of unconventional letter-writing, they cannot be regarded as numerous in respect of the bulk of the work, and in any broad judgment it must be held that the unconcerted accent is betrayed at every point. The letters are for the most part highly ornate productions. There are inspired pages which, like all inspirations, are unconcerted, but there are many dull, trivial and tedious pages which, if they strove after such an impression, would not be redeemed by success therein; but, speaking generally, there is not, I think, success of any marked kind. In other words, the colloquial parts are of less interest, and if they are held to be worth including in a translation, it can only be for the sake of completeness and for psychological coherence. Such portions are the burden of the translator, and it cannot be altogether inequitable if they do not prove light to the reader. In translating I have, so far as it seemed to me possible, set aside the colloquial in favour of the philosophical style, and I do not consider that this course has added, at least unnecessarily, to the heaviness of a part of the work, for much and too much of it is of this order in the original. There is full proof that my general standpoint in this matter is correct, and it lies in a fact to which allusion has already been made in the bibliographical part of this notice, namely, that the second edition of the *Rêveries* swells the number of its

pages, as compared with the first, by the simple method of lifting whole sections from *Obermann*, a process which would have been to my mind inconceivable had the latter work been of the unpremeditated order that is claimed for it by those who regard it as an unconventional correspondence. The *Rêveries*, as need hardly be said, are of a highly philosophical and, indeed, recondite order, and the fact that in the author's opinion they could be made to blend with selections from *Obermann* is proof positive that *Obermann* really, for the most part, and certainly as regards the best therein, is also of the philosophical order.

I shall venture now, in the interests of clearness, to put in a summary manner a few heads of the considerations which it is desirable to lay to heart in undertaking any serious reflections upon *Obermann*. It is a work of initiation in more than the sense intended by the author, who makes use of this idea in his preliminary observations, and it is offered in its English guise only to those who are initiated or who are capable thereof. The psychological condition which it depicts, taken in conjunction with other fields of experience into which the author entered at a later stage of his life, offers ground for reflection which would be unassimilable by the ordinary reader or the ordinary thoughtful man, or even by persons disposed to self-improvement along recognised and conventional lines. *Obermann* is wholly and entirely distinct from what is understood usually by the French memoir or French *correspondance intime*. It is a book of the "sorrows and aspirations" of the soul, not less important, as already pointed out, because it depicts the soul in darkness and inhibition, and if we are unable to affirm that Senancour reached any term of real spiritual experience, we shall still leave him at a hopeful stage upon the road.

Having cited one fact to show that *Obermann* cannot

be regarded either as a real correspondence or as a successful attempt at the imitation of one, I should add in justice, and perhaps in further proof of my point, that it would also be erroneous to describe it conventionally as an imaginary correspondence. Its epistolary form is to some extent accidental, or a matter of convenience. It is the spiritual history of Senancour up to a certain point. A second part was promised or suggested which never appeared as such, but the work entitled "Meditations of an Unknown Recluse" is the real second part of *Obermann*, because it is the sequel of his spiritual history.

If it is possible to justify at all a translation of Senancour, and on this point as a whole the justification must be *Obermann* itself, such an undertaking at the present time may be held to have a peculiar fitness, for there is more than one respect in which we may be said to have awakened from some such period of disillusion as prevailed at the beginning of the nineteenth century. There is no exact parallel, and the attempt to institute a specific, much less minute, comparison would be foolish. The analogies, however, subsist, and in so far as they are accompanied by antitheses, *Obermann* does not less stand out in the light of these as an important object-lesson. It is, in fact, the lesson of an escape. The condition of Senancour, as we may take him to have pictured it in these letters, is no illogical consequence of a Belfast Address. That Address has now been definitely buried with all its forms and ways, more permanently and more effectually than Senancour, for some obscure reason, wished to entomb *Obermann* when he prefixed to the second edition of his *Rêveries* the express statement that *Obermann* would never be reprinted. As a fact, it was reprinted and, moreover, re-edited and enlarged, which will not happen to the Belfast Address, unless, indeed, its reproduction should be required, some time or other,

also as an object-lesson. The period of disillusion from which we have emerged must not be represented exactly as a product of that Address, for the Address was rather a product of the aspect from which life and its problems were regarded, and that aspect also produced disillusion. The keynote of the period was materialism, a word which is now rapidly losing all its offensive meaning, because the intellectual attitude which it symbolised is now dead. The corresponding attitude at the close of the eighteenth century is represented by the Philosophical Dictionary, by Condorcet, Diderot and Boulanger. The disillusion of that attitude was the ice which, according to Matthew Arnold, had entered the soul of Senancour. He contrived to emerge into another temperature, and to discern the portents at least of that star of truth and justice which was expected by Saint-Martin, just as we have ourselves slipped somehow through dark seas into the brighter waters of the twentieth century. The psychological fact of Senancour is not, therefore, without its interest and importance. The qualities which ultimately brought him out of the constraint and weariness are those which have saved us, and there is a sense in which, even at this day, his state and his story hold up the glass to our own. So much by way of analogy in rough delineation. As regards the antithesis, it is sufficient to say that the fires and fervours of the French Revolution stand out in contrast to the close of the nineteenth century, the final decades of which, in spite of wars and rumours of wars, of standing armies, of grave social and other questions, were years of peace characterised by progressive amelioration in the physical order, by a singular equality of general temperament and hence also by few enthusiasms. Matthew Arnold, when enumerating the seers of his "troubled day," found three only who had contrived to see the path before them, and one of these was Senan-

cour. As to how he had so contrived, I do not know that Arnold could have given a correct answer. It is certainly not, as he seems to suggest, through some secret of passive endurance: "Strive not, die also thou!" To quench is not to satisfy. The key is given rather by the inscription on the tomb of Senancour: "Eternity, be thou my refuge!" It was the consciousness of the soul, of the things which are not seen and eternal, of God and our part in God and immortality, which brought Senancour to the enjoyment of a certain measure of the light which has come upon the souls of a growing concourse of persons in the present day, is transforming thought and must ultimately transform life, and though in a certain sense the fullest experience of this light is almost necessarily reserved for a few, it is also destined to influence very largely the age and the world at large.

How a man who was intellectually conspicuous for his period came to be taught of the Spirit at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and what are the lessons which he leaves us, either directly or by inference, cannot fail to be of interest; and to elucidate these points it will be necessary to take a short survey of the letters of *Obermann*, their beauties and their defects, designed to exhibit the views of their author at the period of that book on subjects of real importance.

There are at the beginning one or two critical points which, for the sake of clearness, had better be dealt with out of hand, as, at one or another stage, notice must be taken of them. I have indicated already that there is a good deal of waste substance in *Obermann*, and to defend this would be inexcusable to educated discernment and fairly impossible even for the least intelligent and discriminate of its admirers. This waste substance may be written down authoritatively as those parts which were possibly intended

to give an accent of realism to the correspondence. Where there is a lighter vein in *Obermann* there is, by comparison at least, a poorness which tends frequently to become conspicuous and in some occasional attempts at persiflage is not short of pitiable, as, for example, the distinction between what is proved and what is certain in the forty-seventh letter. Why it has been thought advisable to retain all this laboured and weary trifling has also been indicated. *Obermann* is a work of continuity, and it would be at the expense of the whole book if it were separated into detached essays, isolated reflections, or descriptive passages. It would have been much easier and pleasanter to have cut out all that I have myself found vapid and tedious, but such a personal feeling is not safe as a criterion, and in this note-book of a specialist in self-analysis, each of the occult fraternity to whom he makes appeal in his preface may be content to mark that which impresses them and leave what remains to the others. The whole is useful as an event in the growth of a mind which at length found other supports, escaping from the weariness of its own limitations and attaining something of heaven and light.

The reader must, therefore, deal with the work as a whole, accepting what seems to him best, over which I trust that he will be in agreement with me, and confessing, for the rest, that there are a thousand things which he must be prepared to excuse in *Obermann*, which will be also those indicated by me if he is the reader for whom I have rendered it. As to others who are beyond my care and knowledge, there may be any number of the uninitiated who are incapable of initiation, for whom vapidities and commonplaces, declaimed from the height of vulgar thought, may form excellent mental pabulum, and who may find some food in Senancour, should the unalterable providence of books permit them to come

across *Obermann*. Also, if there should be any one at this day to whom the peculiar anti-Christian standpoint of Senancour may by chance appeal, it is possible that he will take it to his heart of hearts. Let all of us, however, who aspire to be true sons of the doctrine and the light forgive Senancour, as best we can, all that is opposed to this light, his melancholy fantasies on the vanity of fleeting enjoyments, less for their tincture of pessimism than because of their commonplace, together with his halting eloquence in a hundred natural descriptions, and the final impenitence of sentiment which can tolerate in the ninetieth letter a suggestion of dietary for the disorders of the soul.

Another stricture which must, I think, be passed upon *Obermann* is that after the epoch of the sorcerers, the Grimoire of Honorius, and the dominion of Abracadabra, he was perhaps among the first genuine apostles of mere words. His pages are often a running stream of sound, not always too attractive in its melody, voicing too often the vaguest quality of sense, using more than is endurable the terminology of the nebulous and unsignificant—constructions, in a word, without tangible meaning.

A mere occasional dulness is, of course, to be expected in such letters, and is therefore tolerable. Many passages are inapplicable to the modern standpoint, many ideas are exploded, and many disquisitions could have been of very little account even at the period when they were written, as, for example, in the fifty-second letter, the discourse on the influence of climates in the modification of peoples. But these things are not worse or more dry than many pages of Amiel or Marie Bashkirtseff, which find favour to-day, or than the "Journal of a Self-Observer," by Lavater, which had its readers and, we may presume, its admirers, seeing that this, too, was translated, in a generation that has passed.

Occasionally it may be questioned whether my apology

for an unselected translation can be held to cover certain sections; whether in the seventy-second letter there can be really an excuse for the egregious conversation with a nameless officer who ordered, but in what way does not appear, a life which seems to have been quite trivial with a view to an enjoyment, but of what also fails to transpire—unaccompanied by a weariness which should have at least overcome his listener. But *Obermann* was so dull and so wearied that it did not increase his dulness or add to his exhaustion. And the same doubt is raised by the fifty-second letter, which offers a depressing account of a depressing journey undertaken by a disillusionised idler and a tiresome young man of promise, who does not like Paris but permits himself to perambulate its environs. And yet, as a redeeming feature, we may note a certain touch of Nature and a certain measure of insight into character. Saving clauses of this kind might be introduced at many points of a criticism which would otherwise be severe. Not infrequently, when dealing even with the most unpromising materials and in none too promising a manner, a sudden light breaks forth and illuminates the whole. In Letter XXI. there is an unspeakable disquisition upon beauty—beauty as it was conceived, of all periods in the universe, by that hopeless period which succeeded Diderot, inhibited as it was from every grace and sacrament, while *Obermann* himself, when he intellectualised, was no less in excommunication and under anathema. But even here, amidst barren discourse without unction, a sudden inspiration comes upon him; he casts aside all profitless distinctions and identifies for a moment the sentiment of beauty with the perception of the Infinite. In some cases we get help of a certain sort, which was obviously undesigned by the author, as, for example, in the second fragment appended to Letter XXXV. *Obermann* discoursing on ethics is

Obermann in a moist mist of unilluminated depression. He is never more commonplace than when he is crying down the commonplace conventions of that which passed for wisdom at the cold daybreak of the nineteenth century, and yet he helps us to recognise the futility of that wisdom, less on account of its conventions than its essential hollowness.

We have touched hitherto only upon one side of the field of criticism which is opened out by *Obermann*. We have dealt with that which is nugatory or unimportant; we have now to consider the work as a whole and make also some reference to certain specific points which are philosophically of sufficient importance, or suggestively of sufficient interest, to make it worth while to indicate the particular errors of the writer. Regarding the letters as a whole, Matthew Arnold is, if I remember, the only critic of *Obermann* who points out that it is in the main a work of the sentimental school. As such it connects not only with the "Confessions of Rousseau"; with the *Nouvelle Heloise;* very markedly with the "Sorrows of Werther"; in a lesser degree with "Réné," "Atala" and the "Indian Cottage"; but also with more than one prototype of the sentimental school in England—with Mackenzie and his "Man of Feeling," and, it must be added, with Mrs. Radcliffe, even with "The Romance of the Forest" and "The Mysteries of Udolpho." The statement has an air of absurdity, for the delineation of the states of the soul has at first sight no common ground for comparison with the "shrines of Gothic superstition," the ruined abbeys and the mountain fortresses of this school of romance, and still less, if possible, with its peculiar management of mysteries. But so far as *Obermann* is a work of feeling, it recalls, and that pointedly, the characteristic quality of feeling which is found in the sentimental school, and especially in Mrs.

Radcliffe. Let any one compare the temperament which manifests in the sixth letter with the disposition of Valancourt in "The Mysteries of Udolpho," and generally, the pleasing melancholy which was the chief delight of *Obermann* with the same favourite condition as it is described times out of number in connection with the heroines of Mrs. Radcliffe, and they will see that it is the same temperament, minus the religious sentiment, elementary as it was, which inspired the vapid and tiresome creations of one who was once described and accepted as "a mighty magician, bred and nourished by the Florentine muses. . . . amidst all the dreariness of enchantment."[1]

Obermann is sufficiently many-sided to make any summary account of it not so much difficult as impossible. This is partly, but not fully, to be accounted for by the fact that it is a book of moods—many moods, but with one only that is really dominant, and this is the mood of weariness. For many persons, therefore, its handiest description would be that it is the diary of an *ennuyé;* but this is not at all adequate, for, in the first place, it never entered into the heart of the ordinary *ennuyé* to conceive the weariness of *Obermann*, nor, secondly, in the midst of that weariness, to conceive the thoughts of *Obermann*. He is rather like an outworn pilgrim of the ages who, at length brought face to face with eternity, exclaims: Is this all? Yet he is in no sense as a God who has grown weary, for, of many trifles, there are some which tire him and yet some which divert him. He was so alive to minute inconveniences and small disappointments that he thought it worth while to devote a letter to the necessity of a boat on Lake Chessel for the benefit of the invalids at the baths—and for his own pleasure (Letter LVII.). Others will regard themselves as having grasped the key to the entire work when they have become satisfied

[1] On this point see further the twenty-fourth letter of *Obermann*.

that the spleen, the exhaustion, the pessimism, the disappointment of *Obermann* were all consequent on the fact that he was out of employment, and that he carried through the waste places of the immortal soul the burden of his idleness emblazoned with the legend of the mendicant mechanic: "We've got no work to do." I will not deny that the inmost character of *Obermann* might be open to him who could explain precisely why he enjoyed the slow wheeling of a barrow laden with grapes, and yet withered under the tardiness and postponements of the law in a suit the issue of which did not interest, however much it might concern him. But though want of some defined end of a practical kind in life was from time to time a matter of regret with *Obermann*, or, more correctly, of speculation as to whether it might have acted as an anodyne, he was too shrewd an observer to be deceived by the colourable imitations and substitutes which are offered by the world in place of the one thing needful. We may note in this connection the practical wisdom at the close of the seventy-sixth letter, wherein he felicitates himself upon the possession of a moderate sufficiency, by which he could live without ostentation, and affirms that an independent fortune is one of the great means of happiness and even of wisdom—a sane view, in comparison with which the childish philosophy of bread-winning for its own sake is not only childish but mischievous. For myself I have already indicated that *Obermann* is the experience amidst finite things of a consciousness that has been awakened to the things that are infinite and eternal; but I have suggested it as a palmary point of great importance, not as an exhaustive description. He tells us (Letter III.) that he was in search of other manners and a new nature, but I think personally that he sought without knowing it the perfect life of the transcendental world.

In many respects *Obermann* is a book of the lamentations of the soul on a journey from the centre, while it knows well that its rest remains at the centre.

There are yet those who will describe *Obermann*, because he does so himself practically[1] as a hermit hungry for companionship, especially for the sight, the society, the intimacy of a true friend; but, failing that, grasping at the chance of securing the friend of that true friend, who also and more especially, is the brother of a woman whom he has loved. By many subtle hints, many unintended and incomplete revelations, many indirect openings and insights, we discern how much this love and the disappointment which ensued upon it have contributed not merely to his disenchantment but to his permanent loss in life, his intellectual enervation and the constriction of all his destiny. But although it is obvious that *Obermann*, like the French mystic of a generation before, to whom I shall have occasion to recur, very obviously and earnestly desired, even while he misdoubted, the married state, yet the book is not the product of the dreams and the longings of a celibate; and in this connection we should remember, firstly, that Senancour himself had been married, and, secondly, that no general description of *Obermann* which would not be true psychologically as regards Senancour, can be taken to represent it adequately.

There is yet one other description and one explanation which is not less entitled to our respect because we are most of us unable to accept it, at least as the whole truth, and this is the explanation of the Catholic, who will discern in *Obermann* the history of a soul which has gone utterly astray because it has broken from the anchor of the faith. I am describing this point of view somewhat conventionally, so as to be true to the spirit of the criticism, which in-

[1] Letter LXIX.

variably finds its expression in a convention. The case is as strong as the assumption upon which it rests, and it is only by realising that it gives expression to but a part of the truth that it is possible to set it aside. Otherwise it puts a circle about the entire experience of *Obermann* and accounts for it page after page and line by line. The assumption is that pious and solicitous parents reared him in the true Church and designed him for the highest vocation which can be offered within the pale of its union, but that at the age when he should have acted upon the choice, he had already unsettled his mind, otherwise inexperienced and ill-equipped, by the desultory reading of current infidel literature; that he had conceived, in consequence, a strong aversion from the life of sanctity; that he broke all ties to escape from it; and that, once having corrupted his faith, he was henceforth unstable, restless, unprofitable to himself and the world. The skilled hand could extract passage after passage from *Obermann* as proof positive that he suffered simply the common misery and daily experience of the soul apart from God, which at the same time has once known the light and has, therefore, no excuse for deserting it. If this book, therefore, should fall into the hands of convinced Catholics, it cannot fail to offer them a signal instance for the fortification of their faith, and the explanation for them will be at once complete and unchallengeable. Within its own lines there are many of us who will, I trust, be disposed to regard it as entirely excellent. Indeed, speaking for the school which I represent, it only requires to be restated in the terms of universal religion to expose the whole truth. *Obermann* and Senancour, who for the purposes of this portion of our study was also *Obermann*, had the misfortune, not only, as we have seen, to be conscious of the infinite and the eternal, but to be conscious that he was apart from both. He was separated by disposition, through waywardness,

fickleness and the many moods of sentimentalism; intellectually, through an inadequate and narrow naturalism born of trumpery philosophical reading, combined with rudimentary observation and a bourgeois outlook; morally, by an arrest in his development which places him in a lower groove of vulgarity and conventionalism than the ethics of the street-preacher; by education, through mere crassness and an eye for utility; by habit, chiefly through the continual regard of vital matters in the light of their meanest part. All these grounds of unhappy experience severally and collectively instilled into him their bitter lessons. His disposition led him to recognise an ingrained incapacity; his intellectual outlook to regard life as abortive; his moral feelings to look doubtfully at the higher sentiments and the aspirations which are above evidence; his habits, his moods, his manners to have no eye for beauty, truth, or sincerity in the presence of a defect, not so much because of the deficiency which it indicated, but because he happened to dislike it. We might collect almost by random score upon score of cases in point as to the mischance and miscarriage of his thoughts owing to these limitations of his nature. Observe him in Letter LXXXI. discoursing as a natural philosopher, as a kind of cosmologist at large, illustrating his absolute inability to understand the fundamental problems of philosophy and creating an insoluble difficulty where there is no ground for doubt and no possibility of two educated views. The late creation of the universe, in other words, neither is nor can be an impediment to the human mind if we grant the fact of creation, nor yet if we deny that fact. In eternity there is neither late nor early. Nor is it true that the universe subsists for a time only; it subsists, has subsisted and will subsist for all time, which is simply the limit of the universe as regards duration, and outside it there is no time. So much for *Obermann* figuring as a speculative

philosopher. As regards some other problems of the relations between God and man, their best commentary is that the writer changed his views. But we have said that he had also his ethics, and a specimen which will serve for the whole occurs in Letter XLIV., where he rails against those who would deny a true sanction to morality apart from religion, and yet in his turn is disposed to deny that—or rather it has never struck him to inquire whether—there is a sanction for the aspirations of the soul apart from conventional doctrine. To suggest that such doctrine is only an accident of the soul's aspiration would have been to him a source of astonishment, though possibly also to his age, which had awakened sourly from the dream of the French Revolution, and for the moment loathed all that was blessed because it was itself unblessed.

Though less apparent and in some sense, indeed, concealed, a similar spirit is at the root of the lamentations which prompt such letters as the thirty-ninth, to which the true answer would be that in the last resource man makes his own sacraments; he chooses those which shall be to him the outward sign of an inward grace, and he makes them void at will; yet the sacraments are always in the world, always ministering and always efficacious. And now as regards the habit and the bias of his thought, to take one instance out of many, in Letter XLIV. *Obermann* forgets that faith in the first resource is an act of the will, and hence Pascal was neither absurd nor puerile, for it is admitted that he would have been right as regards conduct. But conduct is also a question of resolution; like faith, but in a narrower measure because it depends more upon secondary considerations, it is a question of the determination to take a certain road which experience has shown to be the right road, and it is open to any one to prove it in their own persons and souls on the one condition that they choose to do so.

Wise or great, we have all of us indifferently the eternal justice to reckon with. After centuries of discussion it remains impregnably certain that the consideration of eternity is the true sanction of morals, because it is that consideration which alone makes anything of any consequence. It imparts the one real and enduring vital import. It has been sometimes said that this is a mean view, but life itself is meanness apart from the motive of eternity.

I have mentioned these few instances out of many others which could be cited to illustrate the limitations of *Obermann* in the presence of the real problems of existence—as, firstly, questions of what Balmes would term fundamental philosophy, and, secondly, the grounds of morality; or alternatively the basis of faith. It is suggested by M. Levallois that in creating *Obermann* Senancour intended to substitute for the man of his period, narrow in individuality and particular in sentiment, some ideal yet actual being, independent of circumstances, but capable of being affected by these; daring much and yet knowing how to govern his boldness; possessing exalted faculties, the germ of solid moral qualities, ardent sensibility, wide sympathy, a curiosity of knowledge assisted by unusual powers of contemplation, the desire of the permanent, the aspiration after devotion; but all combined with sincerity, disinterest, simplicity and a singular passion for retirement. I do not think that this design is represented by the result as we possess it, nor does it seem to me more satisfactory as a description than some of those which we have already agreed to set aside as inadequate. M. Levallois has been himself at the pains of showing us, and I think quite successfully, from the first edition of the *Rêveries*, that some at least of the sensations and the personal ideas of Senancour enter into *Obermann*. I believe that it would be possible to take the whole of his

literary work and to demonstrate by its analysis that the psychology of *Obermann* was the psychology of Senancour at the period when that work was written, and that, as already suggested, he simply circumstanced his hero within the lines by which he would himself have wished to be environed. There can be little doubt that he regretted his hasty marriage, and *Obermann* is, therefore, a bachelor; he regretted deeply and reasonably the loss of his inheritance, and he makes *Obermann* moderately easy as regards financial matters. He no doubt detested his enforced existence in Paris, and he gives *Obermann* all the world of mountains. Nor is this all; so great to him was the privation of his poverty that he threatens his hero therewith; so much did he detest Paris that his hero for a period is forced to share his misery. As regards the inner life, the thoughts, the aspirations, the convictions and the burden of misfortunes, they are too real in *Obermann* for it to be worth insisting upon that they are other than the thoughts, aspirations, convictions and burdens of Senancour, and the explanation and description of *Obermann* is that he wrote it because it was his own nature that he was depicting. If one more proof is wanting, we may find it right to our hand in the distaste that he felt for it very soon after its publication; his anxiety that it should be forgotten, above all by himself; his anxiety to suppress it, overcome at length, after many years, only with difficulty and only at a period when he was removed from it at a sufficient distance to be able to regard it, at least to some extent, as a document and not as a confession, the details of which annoyed and even harrowed him.

I do not doubt that most of my readers will be able from their own experience to appreciate this point fully; we have all of us, at some time and in some way, laid bare our inmost selves and have shuddered at it sub-

sequently, not at all because of what was revealed, but at the fact of the revelation; and we have invariably, I think, thenceforward sought to shut out the fact from ourselves, rather even than from others, until in the course of time we have ourselves so changed that it has ceased to grate upon us. Well, then, Senancour wrote himself out at full length, as he was at the period of *Obermann*. He believed in no God[1]—unless law, order and the fatality of both may, after some obscure fashion, have assumed in his mind something of the conception of the Deity—and God is never once mentioned in *Obermann*;[2] he despised all official religion, and *Obermann* speaks only with disdain of the dirty monk and the ascetic who is half a rogue;[3] he thought that the only hope for man was by some such return to Nature as was dreamed by Rousseau, and this belief is expressed not less fully in *Obermann* than in the "Reveries on the Primitive Nature of Man," which are explicitly devoted to the subject; finally, he did not believe in immortality, and this consolation is, therefore, denied his hero. But as I have mentioned so frequently already, the infinite and eternal were about him, even as they were within him; excluded as he was from all the grace of their ministry, he was conscious of their presence, their appeal and their power, and because he could not respond to these they overwhelmed him, and this excommunication, this consciousness, this weight are all in *Obermann*. They are its sorrow, its greatness, its sublimity; they are its "title to consideration," to place and

[1] This observation is offered under all the qualifications which may be necessary in view of the statements on the subject introduced in the second edition of the *Rêveries*, to which reference will be made subsequently.

[2] This statement is also subject to a note which was added, as will be seen, to a later edition of *Obermann*.

[3] M. Levallois says that he set aside religious traditions with respectful irony. I observe no trace of respect, and to term his references ironical is to offer them too high a testimony.

permanence; they are what the boulevards did not dream of at the beginning of the nineteenth century; they are that which separates *Obermann* from the daily trade of Senancour, by which he bought bread for his children; they are separated by a distinction of kind and not of degree, even as the *panis vivus et vitalis* is distinguished from "the bread by which men die." They are, in fine, the qualities by which *Obermann* has persisted after the lapse of a hundred years, and by which I feel justified in offering it to English readers after all this lapse of time, even to the twentieth century.

What did this consciousness, under such conditions, produce in Senancour? What else was it possible for it to beget but melancholy and weariness, intense melancholy and unnatural weariness, in a word, the melancholy and the pessimism of *Obermann* and the weariness—ever described but always exceeding description—which recurs on every page of *Obermann?*[1]

My readers will scarcely expect that any clear and explicit account of the escape of Senancour from this condition will be found elsewhere in his literary work. No person was less disposed to write his memoirs openly; no person having written the memoirs of his soul, took more pains to conceal it than Senancour; no person went to work more laboriously to disavow his share of all that was best in the work. The perpetual shifts to which he had recourse in the attempt to conceal the authorship of *Obermann* will be seen in the notes to that work. I have retained these in translating, though I must confess that they are for the most part so much beneath criticism that I am tempted to regard their puerility as a purpose of the author, part of

[1] Sainte-Beuve says: "The author followed his interior line, ever absorbed in his thoughts of bitterness and disappointment, deficient and broken destiny, littleness and stupor in presence of the infinite."—*Portraits Contemporains*, vol. i.

the make-believe which he adopted in the hope of creating a distinction, prompted by his shyness and reserve, between *Obermann* the writer of letters and Senancour the self-styled editor. Similar subterfuges are also found in the *Méditations*,[1] and there is a suggestion of retrenchment and editing even in the unimportant *Isabelle*.[2]

But the works themselves atone for the silence and disavow the shifts of Senancour. Under what circumstances we do not know, nor does it indeed signify, his opinions changed with his nature, and his nature underwent a change of great importance and interest, which made it possible for the author of *Obermann*—year 1804—to be also the author of the *Méditations*, year 1819. We shall find that he who told us in *Obermann* how he was in search of other manners and a new nature, by some mysterious workings of the Spirit, came to find both, perhaps in that quiet and unpretentious abode in the Rue de la Cerisaie; and the first thing that will strike the reader of the *Méditations*, should he ever come across them, is the absence of the note of weariness. From that mood, from that particular disability, Senancour has contrived his escape. There are more synonyms for weariness than perhaps for any other condition of humanity; it is one of the symptoms in chief, possibly the symptom *par excellence*, of the disease which is not life, but seems almost as inseparable from the normal existence of the thoughtful man as the quality of life itself. We may explain it by saying that vocation is the key of life, and that vocation, since humanity departed from

[1] Senancour, acting as the pretended editor, reports that the papers which he publishes, have been referred to a certain hermit who had made his retreat in the forest of Fontainebleau and then proceeds to explain why this person could not have been the true author. As this kind of mockery extends to nearly sixty pages of the preliminary observations, it becomes somewhat tedious.

[2] See p. 6.

the primitive nature of which Senancour dreamed but did not dream aright, has been nearly always misconstrued by humanity. *Obermann* is a history of weariness because it is a history of the want of proper occupation for the soul. There is no question, as we have seen, of the dignity of mere labour, of the law that those who will not work shall not eat, or any of the kindred delusions. It is a question of man's inherent spiritual energy and of its true object. Now weariness is represented in the *Méditations* as the share of those whom the world has subjugated.[1] It is one of the fruits of our misguidance,[2] and if Senancour is conscious of it personally any longer in his own spirit, it is only in the contemplation of the frivolities which dissipate the real strength of man.[3] It is part of the yoke of our weakness, but we are still free, under the eye of Divinity, to the extent of our power, primarily, to abstain from consent to evil and, secondly, to fulfil the law.[4] From such burdens the way of escape is plain, and our first design should be to place ourselves beyond their pressure. It will be seen at once that we are breathing an air which is fresher, clearer and purer. The weariness of *Obermann* is not the glorious fatigue of him who has ascended the intellectual mountains and, sinking worn out at some great height, has still eyes to survey and a heart to be enkindled at the grand prospects which are about him. Nor is it either the fatigue, the exhaustion and the despair of him who, having thus ascended, sees only blank voids of space. The weariness of *Obermann* is that of the dweller in marsh and morass, and of the follower of the false marsh-lights. The solitary who speaks in the *Méditations* may be denied the alpine peaks, and yet, in the seclusion of his hermitage, he has risen higher than *Obermann*, and

[1] *Libres Méditations*, deuxième édition, Paris, 1834, pp. 41, 42.
[2] Ibid., p. 183. [3] Ibid., p. 289. [4] Ibid., p. 292.

so also the melancholy of the *Méditations*—and we shall find melancholy therein, since the highest creations of genius are invariably tinged with sadness—is not the sadness of *Obermann*. It is "the dignity of religious sorrow which is alone able to set us free from so many sombre and useless sorrows."[1] It is the sadness which is not hostile to peace,[2] the sadness which must be experienced in the contemplation of the evils which surround us, and by which we are nevertheless directed towards a better life. And what is the lesson of this sadness? In a hundred ways it bids us be engrossed only with reservation in present beauty, in this fleeting image of the invariable splendours; "here is the place of resistance, the region of expiation; grow strong in order to subsist."[3] There will be no need to invite my readers to make an express comparison of this melancholy with that which embitters *Obermann*. It would be impossible to describe the *Méditations* as the work of an acknowledged optimist, trading in a process for making the best of both worlds; it would be impossible to affirm that Senancour ever eradicated from his nature the peculiar form of pessimism which seems to have been implanted therein too early for us to know why it took root, but it is redeemed, modified and transfigured in the later work by a perception of the vistas that are beyond this life. He still affirms that "our heritage is suffering, shifting, yielding; there is no question of voluntarily renouncing happiness on earth; such happiness exists not on earth."[4] Having only to choose between afflictions that are sterile and others that are fruitful, he has chosen those which may at least lead on to joy. "The sublime sorrow of the ages" is an expression that would have appealed to him strongly, as I think it would have appealed to *Obermann*, but I know

[1] *Libres Méditations*, p. 14.
[2] Ibid., p. 15.
[3] Ibid., p. 135.
[4] Ibid., p. 95.

also that the author of the *Méditations* would have recognised that here "we receive but what we give"; the sorrow is an imputed sublimity projected from our own depths; perhaps also, in a very real sense, the sublimity is also in ourselves. This truth was missed by *Obermann*, as we can infer readily enough from his fortieth letter, where there is a touching description of the influence of the beloved on the lover; but had he shared the insight of Coleridge he would have known that the transfigured nature of the beloved is really in the life of the lover. Perhaps there were times when he saw it in a vague way; there is a hint of it in the seventy-eighth letter, but it is narrower to say that man has no happiness except that which he imparts.[1] The doctrine itself is one of the mysteries of the inward way, and we shall see later on that this had been in part realised by Senancour. And we are here on the edge of the secret of the great change which had come over him—a secret expressible and to be accounted for, by the three words—God, Immortality, Religion. The *Méditations*, in a word, are the work of one who, by a deep understanding of the law of nature, has at last begun to discern the working of the law of grace in the true and central place of all experience.[2]

The three talismanic words just enumerated could not, however, have exercised their divine sorcery upon the soul of Senancour—which for nearly half a century of its earthly existence had been deaf to them—apart from some wonderful awakening which gave him ears to hear what the Spirit from all time has uttered to the churches that are within us, and this awakening was

[1] This letter is, for the most part, a pleasantry, but it is pleasantry without humour. The best comment on its doctrine of vanity and emptiness is the appeal which it makes to Voltaire.

[2] Among many places to which reference would be possible, see *Libres Méditations*, p. 67.

as of one out of thrall and bond into freedom and all its hopes, capacities and opportunities. Senancour had secured his emancipation; he was free to will and act. He was no longer face to face and paralysed by an infinite fatality apart from all discrimination, all pleading, all mercy. To exhibit the growth of his soul, as shown in the *Méditations*, we must then understand first of all that the workings of the mind had brought about in him a great change as regards the doctrine of the will. Let the reader refer to the forty-third letter of *Obermann*, which offers "proof positive that we are nothing else in the universe than antic figures which a juggler dances," and in which the writer is divided throughout between his contempt for the man who has no higher notion than sticking to his business and his jealousy of the happiness which he may find in doing so. Wishing to be happy, but otherwise scarcely knowing what he wants, he discourses of the concatenation of circumstances and of the ruling of events. He would act, he would will, but he is without scope or object and nothing, therefore, follows from the exercise of his volition. And it appears from many other passages that, albeit nothing is certain, so that the opposite of that which he affirms may be just as true, our notion of the liberty which inheres in will is on the whole more likely to be a part of the delusion which mocks us rather than an essential appanage of the mind.[1] The *Méditations* on the other hand recognise from the beginning[2] that the "own will" of the individual man is on the whole

[1] That which follows from the speculations of *Obermann* had been set down, not less definitely, in the *Rêveries*, for which the independent action of individual will is an impossibility rather than a dream, and for which the consciousness of humanity was seemingly limited to the sum-total of the impressions which it receives from without.

[2] *Libres Méditations*, second edition, p. 7.

better exercised in its abnegation, in which case this liberty of the just is truer and fuller and happier than the independence of licence. And then, recurring to the philosophical and speculative aspect of the question of free-will itself, Senancour takes in hand the objection that liberty in man, and as to whether he possesses it, is a thing incapable of demonstration: and while admitting that we cannot explain freedom in our resolutions, replies firstly that we can no better explain necessity therein; that all reason has failed to establish anything absolute against the liberty of the soul; and that "we must therefore admit the other indications of this faculty, the sentiment of which seems inseparable from the very movement of our life."[1] If in this reasoning we may still trace an uncertain note, it is not the uncertainty of *Obermann*. Senancour has in fact recognised a great truth which I have already mentioned in passing, namely, that the highest things exceed evidence. He gives expression to this himself, and beautifully, when he says: "That which is true essentially is to-day without palpable demonstration; that which has no existence after the terrestrial manner is that which is abstract and necessary; that which is set aside as chimerical is that also which is indestructible."[2] It would be difficult to put more plainly the great and secret doctrine of the seeing soul, that its highest and best lights come to it from regions that are outside the sphere of the rational faculty, that the insufficiency of reason is written large on every horizon of the world of mind.

I have indicated that the name of the Deity never occurs in *Obermann*, a simple fact which was noticed quite early in the criticism of that work. I should now add, what has not been previously observed, that in one

[1] *Libres Méditations*, p. 292.

[1] Ibid., p. 284.

of the fictitious editorial observations appended to the eighty-first letter, it is suggested as certain that the alienation of *Obermann* from doctrines which he deemed accidental did not extend to fundamental religious ideas. Those who are disposed to take seriously the belated explanation of Senancour's personal opinions which appears in the second edition of the *Rêveries*, and wherein he claims to have been always numbered among deists, may make the most of this statement, but there is nothing in the text of *Obermann* to bear out the annotation, unless the existence of an infinite force having a fatal operation can be located among fundamental religious ideas. I agree with M. Levallois that it is difficult, not to say impossible, to recognise deistic doctrine or deistic aspirations in *Obermann*.[1] It is not of course explicitly an atheistical work, though the *Rêveries*, which belong to the same intellectual period, have been so characterised by Sainte-Beuve.[2] It is sufficient to say that, in its misreading of the universe, any conscious realisation of the Divine does not enter into the horizon of the work, whatever private sentiments may have been cherished by the writer. On the other hand this realisation finds expression, directly or indirectly, on every page of the

[1] But I agree also with M. Levallois when he points out that Senancour was never a Voltairian of the old school, and this is equally true whether he was deist or atheist at an early period of his life. It may be fair on this point to add some words of his own justification, as follows: "Those who have misconstrued me have affirmed that I acknowledge no God; but have they comprehended the words, God, light, order, life? If there be no God, can anything exist? . . . I have felt myself, from my infancy, under the eye of the unalterable truth." Among the reminiscences of his childhood which have survived, it is said that in his country rambles he was fond of constructing miniature chapels, improvising open-air altars and simulating processions.

[2] And this characterisation was not challenged by Senancour who, as appears by his private memoranda, took exception to many statements regarding his personal history, which were ventured by his admiring critic.

Méditations. It is only the madman, as they tell us, who perceives in the mixture of good and evil which characterises the universe the sign of some fatal law.[1] The disorder therein is but illusion, the order itself is divine. That which we call evil is the part which is least understood by us in the designs of God. It is true that the Deity dwells for Senancour in heights that are inaccessible to man, "The necessary God is inaccessible."[2] None can presume to know Him as He is, nor can His divine nature be revealed to us.[3] Our inaptitude is so great that herein it becomes impotence, and even the allusion to that nature is for man a sort of profanation. We cannot affirm what God is; in so far as we can define Him at all, it is by affirming that which He is not. Yet in Him alone is reality to be found,[4] and either human reason is but delirium or the Divinity reigns.[5] Apart from the faith in Him there is no true grandeur and even no interest possible to man.[6] But albeit in His essence God is unknowable, in His works He is manifest, and the mere act of living[7] is in a certain sense the attainment of a measure of the knowledge of Him whose seal is set upon all that environs us. In certain strange books of rabbinical theosophy—in the great book of the *Zohar* above all—I have met with this doctrine of the unknowable God in whose knowledge we advance for ever, and though the conception was not reached by Senancour along this by-way of reading, it finds in both an expression which is analogous because it comes out of the heart of both. French naturalist or inspired Jew of Cordova, the abstract doctrine was combined intimately and wonderfully with a wonderful intimacy of possible

[1] *Libres Méditations*, pp. 66 *et seq.* [2] Ibid., p. 175.
[3] Ibid., p. 180. [4] Ibid., p. 204. [5] Ibid., p. 214.
[6] Ibid., p. 297. [7] Ibid., p. 211.

union between the Divine and man, which lifted, in the one case, the exclusive doctor of Israel into contact with universal religion, and, in the other, the melancholy recluse of Paris, exiled from his mountain air, into the fellowship, not simply of Rabbi Simeon, but of Plotinus, and, apart from all official Christianity, apart from all conventional doctrine, into the fellowship of the Seraphic Doctor and of the author of "The City of God." It is not of course a doctrinal concord, for these things are not of doctrine but of experience, and their mode is one of sudden awakening and instant quickening. Even to *Obermann* (Letter XL.) "a perfume, a sound, a ray of light" could reveal that "there are other things in human nature than digestion and slumber." By such means "the electric chain wherewith we are darkly bound" is struck, as Byron puts it in a parallel passage, and whatever the object may be which creates the point of contact—whether of flower or leaf or ocean—it quickens us with pain or pleasure, for our wounding or healing. We can thus see what was not seen by *Obermann*—why he was so affected by the jonquil, as he records in his thirtieth letter, namely, because at the back of everything there is infinity. For the same reason a primrose is more than a primrose for Wordsworth and all poets, and so also "the meanest flower that blows may bring thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." This also justifies the insight of Paracelsus when he testifies that he who tastes a crust of bread tastes all the stars and all the heavens. There are two ways in which the meanest flower that blows may bring thoughts too deep for tears, and the first is so much rarer than the second as to be almost impossible after the first period of youthful sensibility; this is the spontaneous ecstasy of natural joy in the beauty of the outward world, and even in the least significant part of that beauty. The second is by the faculty of reading the

meanings of the mind into all things great and little of the outward world, and this faculty, which, in its measure is manifested in *Obermann*, transforming many of the pages into poetry, was possessed in his later years in a much larger degree by Senancour, when he had come to see that, great or little, in all and through all, the outward world manifests the divine which is beyond us.

Whether or not it was possible for Senancour, with the full and rare sincerity which always actuated him, to claim that his intellectual position had been deistic, in reality, from the beginning, there can be no doubt at all as to his views of the survival of the soul after death, and as to the absolute change which came over him on this fundamental doctrine of all religion. The glibness with which, in constructing his bald Utopia, *Obermann* decides (Letter XIV.) that death ends all, should, in the first place, be noted by the reader and then compared with the laboured lucubration on immortality which occurs in the thirty-eighth letter. It can scarcely be called reasoned; it is a train of ill-accordant thoughts. The dog-illustration is not perhaps more unhappy than the rest of the performance. There is either a common ground of comparison between certain situations, in which case they do not counteract one another, or there is none, and in that case also they are not in opposition because they are not alike. Apart from this, why did it not occur to *Obermann* that some people might accept the dog? He had not of course read the "Analogy." Moreover, he sins against taste not less deeply than against doctrine, when he suggests that there may be a comic side to the desire for eternity. Those who can conceive its object have a right to claim that object, and if it is denied them, they are defrauded.

Such being the position of *Obermann*, unrectified, be it observed, by any emendations in the revised *Rêveries*,[1] it remains for me to say that the desire for immortality palpitates on every page of the *Méditations*. "Wisdom," Senancour tells us, "prescribes that we should do all in our power to deserve a perpetual duration and by no means attempt to balance this life with eternity."[2] He bids us indulge in the hope of entering into new regions;[3] possibly when the phantoms of this outward world are dissipated by the breath of death we shall behold the splendour of the heavens.[4] "This perspective, so beautiful for all, is more visibly suited to insatiable souls, to comprehensive minds, to those who suffer or to those for whom the earthly illusion has lost its force."[5] For himself he would be carefully distinguished from men who have but a feeble hope of a future being, and above all, from men who have the misfortune to regard it as chimerical.[6] His express statement is in fact that "those whom we believe to be dead, have entered into real life, and they wait for our dream to finish."[7] Happy are they who, like him, await immortality![8] "The destruction of mutable things will not trouble them, nor will the flight of time weaken them."[9] The belief is in a peculiar manner the advantage of those who are disabused as regards earthly interest and ambitions. "Beyond the clouds which have massed about this our place of sojourn they behold the gifts of immortal life."[10] Our aspirations towards that life are already a warrant for our faith, because "we can to some extent conceive of the

[1] Of which the original edition expressly treated the idea of immortality as chimerical, and explained consciousness as a succession of impulsions, which must end with the disintegration of the organs, as it began of necessity with their formation.

[2] *Libres Méditations*, p. 34. [3] Ibid., p. 6. [4] Ibid., p. 9.
[5] Ibid. [6] Ibid., p. 31. [7] Ibid., p. 69.
[8] Ibid., p. 105. [9] Ibid., p. 105. [10] Ibid., p. 107.

Celestial Majesty raising our humiliated spirits, but it is impossible to conceive of that Majesty abusing our profound distress."[1] The very arguments made use of to disprove the soul's survival go only to show that the ways of the Divine are mysterious.[2] And hence Senancour concludes that, "to die is to close an eye which is wearied by the uncertain light of torches, and to open it in the still light of the heavenly regions."[3] For, though death may change and thought may for a time be suspended, death will destroy nothing, nor will suspension make him who meditates on eternity the sport of time. "Annihilation is not in conformity with the order of the intellectual world."[4] Here then and now it is merely a time of trial, and the trial is beneficial less or more, but it matters nothing when it procures an enduring tranquillity."[5] "Oh truth supreme! to live is to hope and to wait; to live now is then to be preparing for an unknown life."[6]

Now, given a God who in his essence, and in the last resource, is *ex hypothesi* unknowable, but in whose knowledge the soul may advance for ever, and has actually eternity for its advancement, what are the modes and conditions of the progress? In other words, what is the doctrine of religion professed by Senancour? We must not expect in his case a too accurate use of terms, or anything really adequate in the way of definition, but we may expect that he has been taught something by experi-

[1] *Libres Méditations*, p. 146.
[2] Ibid., p. 122.
[3] Ibid., p. 164.
[4] Ibid., p. 167.
[5] Ibid., pp. 190, 191.
[6] Ibid., p. 303. The first indication of a change in Senancour on the question of the soul and its survival is found in the "Observations" on Chateaubriand, which appeared some years previously to the *Méditations*, and in which he admits that profound reflections offer some ground for hope concerning the immortality of the soul, but not ground for affirmation. It cannot be questioned that at this period he at least desired immortality.

ence and even by intuition. Let us recall in the first place the standpoint of *Obermann*, as shown in the seventy-fifth letter, which may be taken to be typical and representative of anything else that has been uttered therein on the same subject. "Religion," he there tells us, "is a system of the wretched," that is to say, it is an anodyne invented by them or for them. We may of course accept the definition, and may add that it is perhaps for that class of the wretched who have been said to mourn but shall yet be comforted. That is not, however, the sense of *Obermann*, who intends to, and does, class it with the rest of all vanity and bitterness. The first thing that will be noted in the *Méditations*, though it is not the most important in the connection, is that Senancour reverses all this and affirms that, even putting aside the question of the truth which alone is divine, and putting aside also the question of supernatural origin, the most persuasive religion would be that which would centre itself upon the suffering of man.[1] There is perhaps no need to point out that, except accidentally, or in the course of its processes, religion has very little concern with the alleviation of human or any form of suffering. Senancour makes also the mistake of supposing that these processes are of the moral order. "Morality, considered in its whole extent, is the sole science to which we must cleave for ever, the one alone which offers, together with present welfare, the advantage of not despairing about the future, of foreseeing a less trammelled existence, of quietly abandoning days that are drawn down into oblivion, and of discerning without terror, as we approach the end of our dreaming, *the mysteries of the awakening*."[2] I must confess that this language is to me more than incomprehensible, for morality neither gives, nor

[1] *Libres Méditations*, p. 25. [2] Ibid., p. 460.

encourages, nor makes possible, nor concerns itself, nor is in correspondence with any mysteries of the morning of the soul. I know of course that the mistakes on this point are of universal diffusion, and though obviously Senancour went astray with his century on the bonds between morality and religion, there is, I think, some ground for supposing that he included in his generic use of the term morality much more than belongs to that domain of our conduct. He says indeed most expressly: "When we cease to misconstruct all things, when we divine in each disposition of the world *a secret and a marvel*, when we enter into *that perpetual astonishment*, we acquire rectitude by a kind of necessity; we become religious without adopting errors and tranquil despite of our impotence."[1] Senancour therefore does recognise, though somewhat vaguely, that religion is in the first place an intellectual attitude—in other words, an exercise of the will, and among the first things which it shows us, as through a strange glass of vision, is the invariable manifestation of a universal cause. It must be confessed, however, that Senancour did not usually rise above the elementary religion of conduct, the region of copy-book and maxim, governed by a complete manual of manners.[2]

[1] *Libres Méditations*, pp. 231, 232.

[2] From a letter addressed by Senancour, in 1837, to Madame Dupin, it seems to follow that he recognised, (1) a certain efficacy in prayer; (2) the existence of a vast hierarchy of intelligences acting as intermediaries between God and man, which again recalls the Zoharic system of theosophy; (3) a certain tutelage or guardianship exercised by some of these beings over man. Four years previously, namely, in 1832, he stated in the memorandum of his literary life which he addressed to the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, that his religious standpoint was independent of all dogma and every sacerdotal system. There was therefore a growth of religious doctrines in his mind, and from the recognition of angelical mediations to that of the mediation of a Saviour is not so long an intellectual journey as the distance which he seems to have travelled between 1832 and 1837.

It will come as a surprise to my readers, having regard to the above limitation, if I now attempt to connect Senancour, as he appears in the *Méditations*, with men who might be supposed to belong to a very different school. I allude to the Christian Mystics, the investigation of whose literature I have pursued to no small extent and in a number of divergent paths. I speak, however, with knowledge when I affirm that there is a distinct bond of such union, and as a part of his spiritual history that bond is of interest, and, from more than one point of view, of importance. I propose, therefore, to indicate a few links in the chain of connection, and to institute in particular a comparison between the author of *Obermann* and a profound and distinguished mystic of the French school, with whom he exhibits a number of impressive analogies, and with one of whose works at least he was evidently not only acquainted but familiar. As Mysticism is still regarded rather in the nature of a charge, it is a satisfaction to be able to add that, although my conclusion on this subject was reached prior to my acquaintance with the work of M. Levallois,[1] the latter, while admitting that one must not dare to affirm Mysticism of a mind so emancipated and a temperament so logical, yet bears witness that it is nothing short of Mysticism which appears in the *Méditations*, and that he who defined religion as morality in the infinite, wrote of God and of divine things, not indeed

[1] For the heads of my information I am so much indebted to this careful and scholarly student, that it is a pleasure to note that we have both frequently reached the same conclusions independently, for my acquaintance with his work is only of recent date. I have spoken throughout this introduction of the sense of the infinite and the eternal which always characterised Senancour. If the study of his writings had not impressed this on me, I might well have derived it from the introduction of M. Levallois, who says that whatever their apparent difference, all those writings were grouped about one idea; and that was the idea of eternity.

as those Mystics who are inebriated with the sentiment thereof, but with a kind of "calm and reposeful plenitude, everywhere reflecting itself, tincturing every detail and impregnating even the least phrases."[1]

I suppose that the general connection between Senancour and the Mystics must of necessity resolve itself into the fact that he, in common with these, had found that all things are within, and that it is particularly within ourselves that our real blessings must all be sought.[2] He is of course a sign-post only on the road of the Mystics, pointing to peace and retirement,[3] the silence of the passions,[4] the sufficiency of the second best,[5] and the satisfaction and good promise of duty understood in no recondite sense; but to the heights and the depths, to the many mansions of mystery which are in the house of man, to the great desolations and derelictions and to the great raptures—to these he does not point. Nor do I think that the mystic tendency of Senancour was first manifested in the *Méditations*. Even in the earlier *Rêveries* there is a species of averse mysticism, showing one side of the dereliction of spiritual experience with none of the consolations or the lights. I have also found in *Obermann* some secret ways and paths in which strange lights may be encountered, though again—and I would note here in particular the ethical discourse or Manual, which, if I mistake not, is attributed somewhat fantastically to antiquity—what we find is the sorrow, the aloofness, the loneliness of the mystics, but

[1] The term which Levallois seems most inclined to apply to Senancour is *Theosophist*, and in making use of it his intention is evidently to recognise in the *Méditations* and the third edition of the *Rêveries*, an element which is not described when he speaks elsewhere of the profoundly religious character of those works.

[2] *Libres Méditations*, p. 294.

[3] Ibid., p. 503. See also p. 184.

[4] Ibid., p. 403.

[5] Ibid., p. 100.

none of their unction. In his forty-eighth letter *Obermann* approaches them more intimately, for he comes very near to the confession of universal sacramentalism, within even the pronaos, and we see that he is also in search of the Lost Word. He also listens for the eternal language, the voice which speaks for ever behind the veils of the visible world. *N'entendrons nous jamais la parole qui anime l'univers?*[1] he asks in the *Méditations*. Letter LV. of *Obermann* may also be consulted with advantage in this connection, and more especially page 318 of the present transaltion. There are two aspects of the silence and speech of Nature therein referred to. There is its eloquence for the mystic who knows that it is a sacramental world, and there is its silence for the mystic because the word which he seeks throughout it, though it is ever hinted, is never spoken intelligibly therein. It is also full of speech for the merely natural man, who finds all that in his heart which responds to its outward voice; and it is also silent for another type of the natural man, to whom its voices utter nothing because he is too full of weariness, satieties and disillusions to have any ear for such voices.

With reference to the specific instance which I have promised to cite, that, namely, of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, I should like, in the first place, to say that Senancour was a reflective rather than a reading man, and had comparatively little book-knowledge beyond what had been provided him at the beginning by a classical education. A list of the books which he refers to, outside any that must have been consulted for his "Moral and Religious Traditions," or his historical summaries, would not be of great length. There would be the occult philosopher Cornelius Agrippa, especially

[1] Ibid., p. 112.

"The Vanity of the Arts"; there would be Eckartshausen's "Cloud upon the Sanctuary," which must, I think, have impressed him; there was of course "The Imitation"; no doubt there were some of the works of St. Augustine. I am not of course compiling a list, but am citing a few numbers which would enter into it and would be suited to my purpose, which is to introduce the one book which must to all appearance have sunk rather deeply into his mind, namely, Saint-Martin, the Unknown Philosopher, "On the Spirit of Things." Senancour had, needless to say, no tendency to what is commonly understood by occult doctrine. I have noted one or two remarks in the *Méditations* which seem to hint at the preexistence of the soul, but they are too dubious, too much a mere shadow of thought, to bear quotation.[1] So far, therefore, as Saint-Martin was a doctrinal philosopher of the occult school, so far he has no analogies in Senancour, but it so happens that Saint-Martin, great Mystic that he was, had a very slight burden of inheritance from any schools of initiation, and far less than Senancour did he ever have recourse to books. He had passed through a certain school of experience, and it had affected him in specific ways, but he was a first-hand thinker in the universe, and Senancour was like him, and having regard to the similarities which I can trace in their disposition, their natural trends of thought and the consanguinity of their early vocation towards all that they comprehended by truth, justice and order, it would perhaps be more surprising if there were no analogies between them than that those analogies are so numerous, more especially as thoughts on fundamental subjects are often identical, independently of disposition in the thinker. Some of the analogies are even to be found in *Obermann*. The eighty-

[1] *Libres Méditations*, p. 296.

ninth letter is one of the triumphs of the book, with its denial and confession of a great love wedded to a great incapacity. It is in one sense the key to the general situation of *Obermann*.

That situation is of one who does not pretend to live but merely to observe life, and this also was the situation of Saint-Martin, who tells us in his private memoranda that he had passed by life rather than lived it.[1] We may also compare the *Obermann* who affirms that oblivion has become his sole asylum to the second *Obermann* whose tomb still cries, "Eternity, be thou my refuge." And we shall understand that Senancour must have approximated much more closely to him for whom the universe was a great fire lighted since the beginning of all things for the purification of all corrupted beings,[2] and who also, to illustrate the correspondences, analogies and identities with which we are here concerned, tells us that all who are instructed in fundamental truths speak the same language, for they are inhabitants of the same country.[3] If it must be confessed that these thoughts are too remote as regards their form for Senancour to have perhaps appreciated or even tolerated them, he was not much apart from their essence. There are many passages in the *Méditations* which might well have been written by Saint-Martin, as, for example, when Senancour formulates this aspiration: "May the sincerity of our views and the purity of our conduct make us worthy to be received among the adepts called gradually to the participation of the mystery without bounds."[4]

Senancour is in specific and in literal agreement with

[1] Life of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, the "Unknown Philosopher," p. 60.
[2] Ibid., p. 375.
[3] Ibid., p. 368.
[4] *Libres Méditations*, p. 417.

Saint-Martin when he maintains that the principle of our actions and the real object of our desires appear alien to the present law.[1] Had Senancour educed this doctrine to its full term he might have seen all martinism or all mysticism issuing from it as tree from seed. It implies the ante-natal state of man and something in the nature of a fall, elsewhere fully recognised by Senancour,[2] and it places man in just that position in the world which, although somewhat crass, may be best described as askew, and which was so fully recognised by Saint-Martin.

Man's claim to immortality is described in terms which are reminiscent of the earlier mystic.[3] It is not our part to acquire immortality as a right, for we cannot do so, but we may obtain certain titles, and these are the title-deeds of our admission into the future regions, which are discussed by Saint-Martin under the grotesque figure of a ticket giving admission to a theatre.[4] Among other matters over which the two thinkers were in substantial agreement was that, within the measure of the system and the capacity of the thoughts of either, the doctrine of endless punishment could find no place; but the objection to it, deeply rooted as it evidently was, takes in both rather a tentative and hesitating manner of expression.[5] Again they are both in agreement about the subject of book-learning, of

[1] *Libres Méditations*, p. 1.

[2] "The faithful should not seek in a fallen world that plenitude of joy which it proclaims always and cannot procure."—Ibid., p. 137. See also the allusion to "ancient errors" which mercy will doubtless forget, because they are merely an interruption of our real destinies. —Ibid., p. 17.

[3] Ibid., p. 129.

[4] *De L'Esprit des Choses. Par le Philosophe Inconnu*, tom. ii. pp. 61, 62.—"Life of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin," pp. 212, 213.

[5] See, for example, *Libres Méditations*, p. 144. And for Saint-Martin on Resipiscence, see "Life of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin," pp. 130, 162, 210, 213.

which I have already spoken. Saint-Martin anticipated the time when even his own writings would be superfluous, because man would be taught of God and the soul.[1] Senancour founded his objection upon the impossibility of adequate acquisition and thought it better to dispense with what it was impossible to possess thoroughly.[2] Both were also agreed that true foundations are wanting to human science.[3] Saint-Martin went so far as to include mathematics in his impeachment;[4] Senancour considered that inexact proportions sufficed to all our knowledge.[5] After a profound contemplation of Nature, Senancour says that the silence of the universe appals us, but he suggests that it is listening to an irresistible voice without which nothing that is would be established.[6] After the same profound consideration Saint-Martin tells us that Nature is like a dumb being which depicts by motions, as best it can, the principal wants that consume it, but, void of speech, ever leaves its expression far below its desires, and blends ever with its gaiety some serious and melancholy characteristics which are a check on our own joy.[7] The peculiar consolation which is ultimately derived by Saint-Martin is not identical with that of Senancour, but it is very recondite, and as it involves a number of considerations which it would be impossible to make clear in a few words, we must leave it at this point.[8] But for

[1] "Life," as above, p. 61.

[2] *Libres Méditations*, pp. 226 *et seq.* [3] Ibid., p. 232.

[4] "Life of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin. Book vii. § 1, *passim*.

[5] We must not, however, attempt a comparison between the numerical mysticism of Saint-Martin and the fantasies in *Obermann*, Letter XLVII. The intention of the latter is to be half serious, but the result is merely tiresome and nearly stupid.

[6] *Libres Méditations*, p. 234.

[7] "Life of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin," p. 188.

[8] Compare, however, *Obermann*, Letter XLII., with the section entitled "Man and Nature," in my "Life of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin," and especially p. 189.

Saint-Martin and Senancour alike, Nature was a copy of the archetype. Saint-Martin terms it "a portrait of an absent person." Senancour tells us that "the beauties about us are only feeble copies of the incorruptible beauties."[1]

Even in the outward history of the two men there are some interesting affinities and some not less interesting antitheses. Both in their youth were but feebly attracted by what Senancour terms "the maxims and the unconsidered tastes of youth."[2] I have indicated elsewhere[3] that the same spirit which took Senancour to the mountains caused Saint-Martin to lead his hidden life in the cities, and even in the highest circles of the world. I think it follows from *Obermann* that the inclination of Senancour towards the married state had survived his unfortunate experience.[4] There is the same disposition in Saint-Martin, who never married;[5] but what is more curious is this, namely, that those yearnings of *Obermann* which can scarcely be applied to Senancour, supplement what is wanting to the rest for the purpose of the comparison which I am making, and contain, all unconsciously, a more specific analogy with Saint-Martin. There is evidence, as I have already said, in the case of the latter that he also had a desire for the married state, which he only forbore to gratify through the want, as he tells us, of any divine direction on the subject. *Obermann*, on the other hand, awaited not the direction of the Spirit but what he terms "the gift of humanity."[6] In literary eccentricities

[1] *Libres Méditations*, p. 319. [2] Ibid., p. 506.

[3] "Life and Doctrines of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, the "Unknown Philosopher," preface, p. x.

[4] He appears also, like Saint-Martin, to have known several intimate female friendships of the so-called Platonic order. Madame Dupin has been already mentioned, and other names are Madame Dufrénoy, Clémence Robert, and Madame de Walkenaër.

[5] Ibid., pp. 54–57. [6] Letter LVIII.

they were also alike; they both had an inscrutable tendency to make-believe that their books were not their own. The one plays at editing, the other at the mysterious deposition of manuscripts with publishers by unknown strangers. Finally the one termed himself the "Unknown Philosopher" and the other the "Unknown Solitary." By way of antithesis between them I may mention the life of Saint-Martin at Lyons surrounded by fellow-mystics and strange schools of initiation, yet ever intent on God, ever doubtful of aught that hindered his progress in divine knowledge, with that life of Senancour, or rather of *Obermann*, also at Lyons, and writing from Lyons of suicide.[1]

The points of comparison between *Obermann* and the *Méditations* in no sense exhaust the interest of the latter work, for almost every leaf is enriched with beautiful and magical thought. It is indeed the one work of Senancour which might lend itself to an anthology of maxims such as M. Levallois appears[2] to have projected, and these maxims would be no slight contribution to the treasury of human thought. There are indeed many flowers which, as much for their fragrance as their beauty, will appeal to those who care to glean in this strange little garden of the soul.

I have now succeeded in establishing, point by point,

[1] It is not the only antithesis: perhaps the most remarkable of all is under the colour of a certain analogy. Saint-Martin and Senancour both inculcated a doctrine of retrogression, but the way of reintegration of the mystic was altogether different from the way of retrogradation of the socio-ethical philosopher, who had carried the return to Nature further than it was dreamed by Rousseau.

[2] I say *appears* because in one place he states that this was his original intention, in another that his monograph was designed as an introduction to such an anthology, and, as it were, a preliminary experiment on the public mind, but in a third place, he confesses that Senancour does not lend himself to selection. I may add that, independently of M. Levallois, a similar design had occurred to me and was rejected for the same reason.

every consideration on the subject of Senancour and his *Obermann* with which I have any personal concern, and I should have preferred to fix here the limits of this notice. But it is desirable for the sake of completeness to deal shortly with some at least of the other works which have received so far only a bare enumeration. The bibliographical history of Senancour is still somewhat obscure, and in the early editions he is exceedingly scarce; the only work which can be said to have survived him, *Obermann*, is that which commanded the least circulation in his own day, though towards the close of his life it rose into prominence without any assistance from the author.[1] A second edition was preparing in 1834, a date when the third edition of *De l'Amour* had been in print for seven years. The order in which his books were published has already been noted, and as regards minor productions they can be disposed of in a rapid sketch. The variations between the first and second editions of *Obermann* are not nearly so marked or so numerous as between the different editions of his other works which call for serious notice. This is to be accounted for by the fact that he was long opposed to its reappearance, and those who over-ruled his opposition seem also to have over-ruled his desire to retouch. In 1809 a note prefixed to the *Rêveries* assures us that a second part of *Obermann* will be in no wise published, and that the first part of *Obermann* will never be reprinted. Among others who were instrumental in reversing the latter decision we must doubtless include Sainte-Beuve, who also provided the preface. The publisher designate was M. Arthur Bertrand, but he died suddenly while the matter was still under consideration and it appeared in the end under other auspices. A note to the

[1] M. Levallois states that the first edition both of the *Rêveries* and of *Obermann* passed almost totally unnoticed.

second edition refers to the determination stated in the *Rêveries*, and points out, almost superfluously, that it was one which could be abandoned without compromising the interests of any one. The present translation as it stands will sufficiently apprise the reader that the Supplement is added matter peculiar to the second and third editions. A portion of the annotations is also wanting in the original, and it is significant that among them there is the important note to the eighty-first letter suggesting that *Obermann* would not have rejected the notions of fundamental religion —evidently an afterthought prompted by the desire of the writer to save the letters from the charge of implied atheism. As regards the second part of *Obermann*, the statement which I have quoted from the *Rêveries* is not, as M. Levallois imagines, the sole existing indication that such a sequel was ever contemplated by Senancour, of which the reader of this translation may satisfy himself by referring to the third note at the end of the present volume.

In the interval between the publication of the first and second editions of *Obermann* we have seen that parts of that work were transferred to the Treatise on Love and the later impressions of the *Rêveries*. As regards the latter work it is impossible to particularise all the interpolations or additions which thus swell the volume. Entire letters of *Obermann* are sometimes transformed into *Rêveries* by the simple method of converting their titles. At other times, and more frequently, excerpts from *Obermann* are introduced into the text at all possible points.[1] The work

[1] The actual evolution was as follows: *Obermann*, 1804; *De l'Amour*, 1805, having many of the best pages of *Obermann* transferred thereto. *Rêveries*, 1809, the second edition, fully one-third of the contents being lifted from the same work. *Rêveries*, 1833, with a further draft on *Obermann*, now completely dismembered. To the literary sense, as we understand it now, Senancour could have had no pretensions.

as it originally stood was comparatively of slender proportions, and there is no need to say that the method by which it was extended was little calculated to produce harmonious results. In a word the majority of readers will be content with so much of the *Rêveries* as belongs to *Obermann*, and will agree to neglect the rest, as to which I need only register a personal opinion that if a collateral survey of its neglected portions were possible in this place, it would be by no means devoid of interest. It is not, however, an interest which would tempt us to reverse the judgment of Matthew Arnold, when he said that for English readers at the present day everything written by Senancour in addition to *Obermann* is negligible with the exception of the *Méditations;* and I can only regret that in this judgment the first-rate importance of the latter for every student of *Obermann* was not more explicitly indicated. This general point admitted, it remains for me to add that at the same time there are at least two other works of Senancour which cannot be dismissed lightly—one from the importance of the work and the criticism to which it lays itself open, and the other from the comparison which it suggests naturally with *Obermann*. Before, however, proceeding to their consideration it will be well to deal shortly with the minor works. They fall under two heads, for I consider that it is unnecessary to dwell upon the still-born tragedy of *Valombre*, while, in spite of certain claims to consideration and merit, there is nothing in the "Observations on the Genius of Christianity" or in "The Vocabulary of Simple Truths" which is likely to be of interest except from the bibliographical standpoint, and any curiosity of this kind can be amply satisfied from the work of Levallois, who has given both of them extended consideration, and to whom therefore I refer.

The heads just mentioned are:—

A. Historical,
B. Political,

and it is difficult for an impartial observer to find anything of importance in either. At the history of Rome and at the account of China, it is altogether unnecessary to pause. It could not be said that they were of special moment even in their own day, but they appeared in a popular series,[1] and as the publication of the first did not make the other impossible, it must be supposed that they were acceptable in an unpretentious and limited manner.[2] In any case they are not now otherwise than dull and unreadable, and, as histories, more exploded than Pinnock and Goldsmith. It is a satisfaction to be able to add that I have found it unnecessary to do more than glance at them, for the purpose of this introduction. They are in truth the hack-work of Senancour, written for the same reason that he contributed to the "Mercury of the Nineteenth Century," namely to get bread for himself and his family, and they are doubtless that part of the work of their author to which Arnold referred when he said that "Senancour pursued literature with scarcely any recommendation or reputation." The "Historical Summary of Moral and Religious Traditions" belongs to the same class, in fact, to the same series. We must remember that Senancour was an admirer of the forgotten Boulanger, whose loss at thirty-seven years was lamented in the annotations to *Obermann*, though he lived long enough to produce an

[1] The *Résumés Historiques*, published by Lecointe and Durey, with Félix Bodin and Leon Thiessé as editors.

[2] M. Levallois distinguishes them from mere compilations, and it is no qualification of the remarks in the text above if this point be conceded.

ambitious treatise on "Antiquity Unveiled,"[1] and there is ground for believing that the opinions of this work impressed Senancour. It is excusable, for of course Volney and Dupuis were the admitted exponents of historical religion, but the fact will not encourage us to expect any great light or wisdom in Senancour's version of the "Traditions of Faith and Ethics." Naturally the work establishes a complete independence of morality in respect of religious belief, and it affirms further, that it is only in ill-regulated states that the fear of God, so far from being the beginning of wisdom, is even so much as a consecration of the public patience. While the reason is not that the notion of Deity is either fond or useless, for it is, on the contrary, consoling and true and has, in fact, a greater part to fulfil than the mere hindering of evil, it is not less difficult to reconcile this standpoint, or the way in which it is expressed, with the *Méditations* of six years earlier. At the same time the growth of religion in the soul is made to go hand in hand with the enlightenment of the eyes of the mind. M. Levallois, however, who has done what he could to rescue the work from oblivion, and presents to us what he regards as durable, efficacious and essential therein, can lend it no higher interest than that which it derives, for those who take an interest in Senancour, from the prosecution which it occasioned him on the appearance of the second edition in 1827. Seeing that he escaped its consequences, the event in question is

[1] *L'Antiquité devoilée par ses usages, ou examen critique des principales opinions, cérémonies et institutions religieuses et politiques des différens peuples de la tour. Par feu* M. Boulanger. Amsterdam, 1766, 4to, a choice specimen of printing.

[2] This philological equipment is, at least, of the same order, for he establishes an analogy between the names *Jesus* and *Zeus*, and between *Jehovah* and *Krishna*.

merely a startling incident in a somewhat colourless career. The prosecution was foolish and unjust, but it remains personally regrettable that Senancour could find no other and more adequate description of Christ, than that of a "respectable moralist,"[1] not because any description which he could offer would be of consequence but because it is crass and banal. As regards the political pamphlets, we have seen already that when Senancour, through the pressure of necessity, had recourse to journalism, it was among the liberal journals that he pursued his *métier;* he was not a politician by disposition,[2] and even in journals merely political he concerned himself rather with the ethical and religious questions of the day. His views upon fundamental questions of polity and sociology would not, I conceive, entitle him to special consideration. We know that he derived from Rousseau certain views upon the primitive state of man, and the desirability of returning thereto. It is not of much moment, but it may be fair to add that he is not in these matters a mere echo of his master. In any case, one consequence was entailed by his views. He was opposed of necessity not only to large states, but also to large cities. The happiness of man, as he understood it, could be found neither in the great empire nor in the great republic. The small town, the small canton, and the federation of states

[1] As the work which contains this reference is subsequent to the *Méditations*, the reader will see that the growth of religion in the soul of Senancour did not bring him nearer, apparently, to doctrinal Christianity, a fact which is obvious in every way, and is fully recognised by his latest biographer in France.

[2] M. Levallois points out, as something which was, for his period, remarkable, that, at the age of thirty-five years, he had been neither a revolutionary, a soldier, nor a functionary. I should add that there are traces of patriotism in his political pamphlets, but they are absent from the rest of his works, and in this he offers a contrast in a marked degree to Saint-Martin.

and towns commended itself to his scheme of things. All these facts have been pointed out by M. Levallois, who has taken the pains to set them forth at length and with considerable judgment. I mention them as they may interest a few persons, but most of us have now realised that the redistribution of governments and peoples is not an anodyne for humanity, and there is no need for us to enlarge upon it. There is a specimen Utopia in the fourteenth letter of *Obermann*, which will serve for all his inspirations; it is bald and impossible, and though, on this occasion, it was scarcely seriously intended, it would be idle to take him seriously when he was most intent upon creating a philosophical commonwealth by means of pen and paper. Setting aside fundamental questions, there are matters of interest in his political pamphlets, though their point has now passed away; but here it is sufficient to observe that as a partisan of law and order, he could be and was no blind admirer of the French Revolution; as the exponent of primitive simplicity and patriarchal government, he was not and could not be dazzled by the conquests of Napoleon. Finally, as a representative of the modern spirit, his sympathy could scarcely be expected with the policy of Louis XVIII., in whom he regarded it as unpardonable that he had exposed so quickly and so openly the designs of the fourteenth century. His estimate of Napoleon is sympathetic and exceedingly discriminating,[1] and there was a time even when he ventured to express the hope that having shown himself a man of strength, he might

[1] It follows from the seventieth letter of *Obermann*, that Senancour showed one taste in common with Napoleon, and that was an admiration for Ossian. Why did this book so impress France, perhaps half of the continent of Europe? The imitative passages in the letter cited seem excellent as a reproduction—abrupt, even spasmodic, conventional, just as the original Ossian.

one day be in a position to prove that he was also a man of exact justice. The grave of this and many bolder aspirations lies at Waterloo. There are some things in this estimate which will recall an earlier estimate of Saint-Martin, who had also looked to Napoleon, and the aspiration in question is equivalent to the aspiration of Saint-Martin, when he permitted himself to trust that one day the star of truth and justice would rise over his country and his life.

We come now to the two works which have been reserved for final consideration—one is the Treatise on Love, and the other the romance of *Isabelle*. We have seen that the first occasioned a newspaper accusation, to which Senancour replied as he could, and we are prepared in advance by *Obermann* to find that the author is capable of sentiment, the domestic sense[1] and a certain quality of passion, but he is deficient in the power of transmutation, and, at least at the period, was devoid of the sense of ecstasy.[2]

I do not know that *De l'Amour* has ever had any serious literary notice with the exception of the panegyric of Levallois, nor indeed, within a measurable period, any discriminating criticism except from Michelet, and he even can scarcely be said to have given more than a passing judgment. The four editions differ considerably from each other and their differences are not unimportant, as evidence of the growth of the author's mind. I do not pretend to have made such a study of the work as would warrant me in choosing between them, or in offering any

[1] See Letter LVIII. for proof of his practical notions and measures of things social in the home-life. They betray a certain shrewdness and insight.

[2] Compare *Obermann*, Letter XXXIV: "The necessities of the heart begin in the vacancy of the soul." What a commentary on the doctrine of Love!

comparative account of them. As regards the second point, there would not be in any event an opportunity of analysis in this notice, and as regards the first I am content to take on trust, and my readers will probably agree with me, the conclusion of Levallois, firstly, because derived opinions will serve well enough when there is no consequence of any moment attaching to them; and secondly, because the writer in question is no unsound guide on a matter the pursuit of which has been to him a labour of love. *De l'Amour* is never likely to be translated, and would find no public if it were, nor do I see anything at this day which would warrant, in England at least, the endorsement of the very high opinion which is formed of it by M. Levallois, nor indeed following him in anything except his conclusion already mentioned, namely, that the fourth edition is the best, because his exhaustive acquaintance with all entitles him to judge of this point.[1] That there is here keen insight, and there a page of fine writing in the better sense of the phrase, can be admitted readily enough. To say that it was a work, and one of the favourites, of Senancour, is in fact to state as much. But to claim that it has any message to deliver at this day on the subject which it discusses, would be to speak idle words for which we might be justly held accountable. Love is the mutual instrument of communication between man and the Divine, and no consideration of the instrument which ignores its greatest use is worth dwelling on. All love subsisting between man and man is merely a sacramental mystery by which we here signify and prepare for that greater communion which is to come. The aberrations, excesses and travesties of human love may possess indeed physiological

[1] I should add, however, that Michelet decides in favour of the first and second editions, and, among them, gives preference to the latter.

interest, but their true significance is lost when love itself is regarded from any lower standpoint than this which I have announced above. Now all this is an unknown world to Senancour,[1] from which it follows that he has and could have nothing to impart to us, having any valid consequence whatever; and I think that people even on a lower plane of thought, who would be far from admitting or at least realising my point of view, would find the treatise of Senancour very nearly unreadable. The one further criticism which it seems necessary to pass on this work, is that it is almost wholly utilitarian, and I have personally glanced over it, seeking in vain for a single truly exalted thought. I have found instead that the utilitarian element referred to has made it possible for the author, within certain limits, to excuse things which from the sacramental standpoint can only be regarded as sacrilege, or in other words, they are a part of what is mystically understood by the Sacraments of Lucifer. It is one of those works which are absolutely without God in the world, and its complete and dolorous inhibition is made further evident by the fact, that there is not one single reference in its pages to any divine subject. As a more express and intelligible condemnation for the ordinary reader, I need only add that it is the production of an almost dispassionate man.[2] "Thy head is clear, thy feeling chill," says Matthew Arnold, addressing the author of *Obermann*. For such a disposition the higher mysteries of Lesbos, which he speaks of indulgently, are not definitely more repellent than *le lit conjugal*, the usage of which he condemns.

[1] He defines himself the purpose of the work when he says that its intention was to combat the levity which obscures the principles of love and the austerity which adulterates them.

[2] He expressly tells us that the strength and tenacity of the marriage bond is not to be sought in love, and that to do so is to misconceive the spirit of the institution.

Isabelle has been sometimes described as the sequel of *Obermann*, its missing second part. It is nothing of the kind. As already explained, the true second part, and at the same time the antithesis of *Obermann*, is the *Méditations*. On the other hand, *Isabelle* connects with *Obermann* as a kind of complement. It is, however, more of an epistolary story. Its inferiority has been mentioned by critics in such terms as to suggest that it is worthless, but though confessedly somewhat bald it is by no means entirely contemptible. For myself I have turned the slight leaves of the meagre octavo with peculiar interest, and have noted many evidences of the same melancholy insight, the same forlorn felicity, the same occasional depth, the same half-conscious, half-instinctive contact with the Infinite and Eternal which those who know Senancour know and admire in *Obermann*. In the forty short epistles, so full of austere restraint and yet so palpitating, there is, in fact, the seal of *Obermann*. "The silence of the fields does not always procure peace," says Isabelle, "but it makes us realise more fully the need of it." Is not that the sentiment of *Obermann* and the mood of *Obermann?* It might be almost an excerpt from his own letters. "Set free from the twofold yoke of the passions and of custom, we cling only to imperishable truth." Is that not the same point of view, the same concealed and scarcely expectant aspiration? "Shall I not assume in this beautiful universe something of nobler attitude?" In one way and another, was not that, throughout, a part of the self-questioning of *Obermann?* And again: "We exact too much and are unreasonable, for we ask to be happy." Is not that the sad cynicism of *Obermann?* And yet again: "To live in contentment and yet retired, our individual vigorous movement must animate that universe which unceasingly fulfils its own in a kind of chilling and silent immobility." Given

Obermann's standpoint, and admitting and passing over the intentional contradiction in the terms of the statement, while it recalls many sayings of *Obermann*, it does not recall any that are better said or more suggestive in their own degree. And to recur to an analogy which I have already instituted, there is precisely the same vein of sentiment in *Isabelle* which enabled us to compare *Obermann* to the romances of Mrs. Radcliffe. If Obermann is the Valancourt of the "Mysteries of Udolpho," Isabelle is its Emily, and one may faintly marvel as to what would be the consequence of their nuptials, after as many adventures and mysteries of the soul as these characters experienced in the castle of the Apennines.

Isabelle is not certainly great; it may even be that it is not remarkable, but it is exceedingly natural, and it shows great insight into certain phases of womanly character. It has also several memorable passages, as for example: "If retirement does not become to us as an asylum, it deprives us of all other." The date of publication is subsequent to the first edition of the "Free Meditations," yet many years seem to divide it from that admirable work. It is of the period of *Obermann* and the earlier *Rêveries*, but with a certain vague suggestion of a little further progress. There is a dim and hesitating tendency to recognise religion and a field for its operation. It is not perhaps necessary to say that religion itself is misunderstood, that there is assumed to be an advance in religious notions when the ethical part of religion comes prominently into the mind, to the exclusion not only of what is understood to be superstition but also of doctrine and ceremonial. As to these points Senancour is more deeply wrong because he is partially right. Morals bear the same foundation to religion that a concrete foundation and a damp-course may be held to bear to a house; so

also ceremonial is not religion, any more than a scaffolding is a house, but scaffolding is not unserviceable in the course of house-making; doctrine again is not religion, any more than the ground-plan is the house itself, yet the ground-plan is not unhelpful to a scheme of architecture.

I have now passed in review, as fully as these limits permit, all the memorials bequeathed to us by the author of *Obermann*. Those which have the elements of permanence are the note-books of his soul in various stages of growth. Though we can trace in all a congenital intellectual limitation which cut him off from the greater spiritual experiences, those readers for whom I have written here and have translated the pages which follow will, I believe, confess with me that we communicate in Senancour with an experience which is real of its kind and is, within its own range, remarkable. The pessimist has passed into an optimist—in the better sense of the expression—and the naturalist into a mystic, too often for such variations to have, in themselves, any strange aspect; but the conversion in the case of Senancour had special characteristics of its own which set it, to some extent, apart, and the records of his inward life are an interesting study and admirable as an object-lesson. Between *Obermann* and the *Méditations* there was assuredly a long pilgrimage of the soul, and though it left Senancour still far from the end, his face was set towards the everlasting Salem; and amidst much which is sad in his history, and amidst much which destroys illusion, we can still stand in spirit over his tomb at Saint-Cloud, and in no uncertain manner assure ourselves that Eternity has become indeed his refuge.

A. E. WAITE.

PREFATORY OBSERVATIONS

BY THE AUTHOR

It will be seen that these letters are the self-expression of a man who feels and not of a man who acts. Memoirs of this kind are outside all concern of the uninitiated, but it is possible that they may interest the adepts. Some of these will regard with interest what has been experienced by one of their fraternity; with others there has been kindred experience; and one has come forward to describe it, or at least to attempt its description. The writer, however, must be judged by his life as a whole, and not by his earlier years; by his entire correspondence, and not by an isolated passage of a venturesome or romanesque kind.

Letters of this class, which are devoid of art or intrigue, must unavoidably meet with small favour outside the scattered and arcane association to which the writer has been affiliated by Nature. The personalities which compose it are for the most part unknown; the species of private memorial which is thus bequeathed them by one of their kindred, can reach them only through public channels, and that at the risk of wearying a considerable number of grave, instructed and even amiable people. The editor's duty may be limited to a word of warning, that neither genius nor science are to be found herein, that this is not to be regarded as a work, and that possibly it may even be said that it is not a reasonable book.

There are numerous productions in which human nature is sketched by a few broad lines. If, notwithstanding, these prolix epistles could make a single man known almost in his completeness, they might well be both fresh and useful. They are far from fulfilling even such a restricted purpose, but if they do not in any sense contain all that might be expected, they at least comprise a part, and this is enough to justify them.

These letters are not a romance. There is no dramatic movement, there are no events preconcerted and led up to, and there is no catastrophe; there is nothing in the collection which is generally understood by interest, nothing of that progressive sequence, of those episodes, of that stimulus to curiosity which are the magic of many good books and the trickery of many others.

At the same time, there are descriptions to be found herein, but they are those which make for the understanding of natural things, affording lights, perhaps too often neglected, on the correspondence between man and that which he calls inanimate.

The passions are also represented, but they are those of a man who was born to receive what they promise, yet to be himself without passion; to employ all, but have only a single end.

Love will again be discovered, but it is love experienced after a manner which perhaps remained to be expressed.

Prolixities have a place also; it is not denied them in Nature. The heart is seldom precise, is never a dialectician. Repetitions will be met with, but if things are good, why so sedulously avoid reverting to them? The repetitions of "Clarissa," the disorder and pretended egotism of Montaigne, repel none but the merely ingenious reader. Rousseau was diffuse frequently. It would appear that the author of these letters did not shrink from the pro-

lixities and the deviations of an untrammelled style. He has written out his thought at full length. It is true that Rousseau had a right to be somewhat spun out; in the present case, the use of the same licence is simply because it has seemed to be good and natural.

Finally, contradictions will be encountered, or those, at least, which are frequently classed as such. But why should we be offended at finding, over matters which are dubious, the for and against brought forward by the same man? As it is indispensable to combine both in order to seize their drift, to weigh, decide and make choice, does it not come to the same thing whether they are in one book or in different books? As a fact, when advanced by one man, it is often done with more equal force, in a more analogous manner, and that which it is advisable to adopt is more clearly seen. Our affections, our desires, our very sentiments, our opinions even, change through the lessons of events, the opportunities of reflection, with age, with all our nature. The man who is so utterly in agreement with himself deceives either himself or you. He has a system, he has taken a side. But the man of sincerity says to you: "My feelings were those once, but they are these now; here are my materials, build for yourself the house of your thought."

It is not for the frigid man to distinguish the differences of human sensations; just as he is unacquainted with their extent so he is unaware of their variety. Why should diverse points of view be more astonishing at diverse ages of the same man, or even at the same moment, than they are in different men? One observes, one seeks, but does not, however, decide. Would you require that the holder of the scales should first of all find the weight which will insure the equilibrium? Everything should be in harmony no doubt in an exact and logical treatise on positive subjects;

MANN

ER I

GENEVA, *July* 8 (*First Year*).

ed since I wrote to you from
intention, for I had formed
everything, and I am here in a

letter will not find you at
shall not hear from you with all
h. I am anxious to learn your
what they will be when this shall
you to judge of my feelings if
books; yet I fear that you may
I certain myself that I do not.
time to consult you. I could
portunity at so vital a moment.
how to regard a determination
planned for my settlement in
abruptly into another situation,
that were entirely unforeseen,
much as anticipate the sequence

I am compelled to admit. The
was, it is true, as sudden as the
pted it, but something more than
vented me from writing to you.

[illegible] REFATORY OBSERVATIONS

[illegible]

object in view. Whatsoever may bear his name will tend to the same purpose; whether he writes himself or makes public the work of others, he will never swerve aside from the moral aim. He does not seek as yet to attain it; any important writing, designed to be useful by its nature, a veritable work, such as can be sketched solely, but none can pretend to complete, should neither be put forth hurriedly, nor even undertaken too soon.

RMANN

LETTER I

GENEVA, *July* 8 (*First Year*).

have passed since I wrote to you from
no new intention, for I had formed
have left everything, and I am here in a

that my letter will not find you at
that hence I shall not hear from you with all
I could wish. I am anxious to learn your
more accurately what they will be when this shall
you. I leave you to judge of my feelings if
really in your bad books; yet I fear that you may
reserve it, nor am I certain myself that I do not.
not even found time to consult you. I could
wished for an opportunity at so vital a moment.
in doubt to this day how to regard a determination
subverts all schemes planned for my settlement in
which transfers me abruptly into another situation,
destines me to things that were entirely unforeseen,
of which I cannot so much as anticipate the sequence
the effects.

There is still more that I am compelled to admit. The
which I have taken was, it is true, as sudden as the
determination which prompted it, but something more than
the want of time has prevented me from writing to you.

Had it been at my disposal, I think that you would have been none the wiser. I should have been afraid of your caution: for once in the world, it seemed necessary to throw discretion to the winds. A narrow and timorous prudence in those to whom fate had confided me, spoiled my first years, and, I verily believe, has wrought me permanent injury. The way of Wisdom lies between diffidence and temerity; the path is difficult. Wisdom must be our guide so far as her horizon is clear, but as to things unknown we have only instinct. If the latter be more hazardous than caution, at least it accomplishes greater results—it either destroys or preserves us; at times its rashness proves our sole refuge, and its part is haply to repair the calamities which have been brought about by discretion.

We must either drag the weight of the chain for ever, or it must be cast off without pausing to deliberate; one or the other seems to me unavoidable. If you are of the same mind, encourage me by saying so. Well do you know the galling chain which has just been broken. I was required to undertake what it was impossible for me to fulfil properly; to embrace a state of life on account of its emolument; to dedicate the capacities of my being to that which is essentially repugnant to its nature. Ought I to have stooped to a momentary compliance, to the deception of a kinsman by persuading him to believe that I should adopt permanently what I could have begun only with a longing to abandon, and thus live in a condition of embroilment, in an unending loathing? May he admit my inability to comply and hold me excused! May he end by realising that conditions so diverse and so antagonistic, wherein the most contrary dispositions find that which belongs to them, cannot be suited indifferently to every temperament; that it is insufficient for a way of life which has contending interests and competitions for its

object to be reputed honest, because one may amass therein without thieving some thirty or forty thousand livres per annum; and that, in a word, I could not forego being a man in order to be a man of business.

I make no attempt to bias you, I state the facts; it is for you to judge concerning them. As you have yourself remarked, a friend's part is to decide without too much partiality.

Had you chanced to be at Lyons, I should scarcely have formed my resolve before consulting you, for then I must have hidden myself away; as it was, I had merely to remain silent. As chance itself is invoked to authorise those steps which we conclude to be unavoidable, I thought it fortunate that you were away. I could never have gone contrary to your opinion, but I was not sorry to act without it, so conscious was I of all that could be urged by reason against the law which a species of fatality imposed on me, against the emotion which carried me away. I have followed rather this private but magisterial impulse than cold temptations to calculate and defer, which, under the guise of caution, may perhaps partake largely of my own indolent constitution, and of a certain infirmity in performance. I have taken the step, and I am glad of it; but where is the man who can ever feel positive that he has acted wisely as regards the final consequences of things?

I have been explaining to you why I have failed to adopt the course that was required of me; I must now say why I have not done anything else. I examined whether I should discard absolutely that calling which I was desired to accept, and by this I was led to consider what other I might assume, and on what resolution I should fix.

It was a case of adopting, of starting, perhaps for life, what so many people, void of all other inner resources,

designate as a calling. I found none that was not foreign to my nature, or opposed to my judgment. I questioned my real self; I reviewed rapidly all that environed me; of my fellow-men I demanded whether they felt as I did, of things whether they accorded with my tastes, and I found that there was harmony neither between myself and society, nor between my wants and the conventions which it has fashioned. I paused in dismay, conscious that I was about to consign my life to unendurable tedium, to mortifications as endless as they would be without object. I set before my heart in succession all that men seek in the various occupations which they choose. I sought even, by the charms of imagination, to embellish those manifold designs which they offer to their passions, and the visionary aims to which they ordain their years. I sought, I say, but I failed. Why is earth thus stripped of illusions in my eyes? Satiety I have in nowise known, the void I find everywhere.

In that day, the first which made known to me the nothingness whereby I am encompassed, in that day which transformed my life, had the leaves of my destiny been placed in my hands to be turned or closed for ever, with what apathy should I have surrendered the empty progression of these hours, so protracted and yet so fleeting, steeped in so much of bitterness, and comforted by no true joy. As you are aware already, it is my ill-fortune that I have never been young: the long-drawn weariness of my earlier years has seemingly eradicated illusion. I am undeceived by the embellishments of external things; my half-closed eyes are never dazzled; too fixed, are never astonished.

That day of vacillation was at least a day of light; it led me to recognise within myself what heretofore I could never discern clearly. In the greatest perplexity which

I had ever known, I enjoyed for the first time the consciousness of my true self. Pursued even in the mournful repose of my accustomed impassiveness, and compelled to be something, I became at length myself; and in these emotions, till then unknown, I was conscious of an energy, at first constricted and dolorous, but with a species of repose in its fulness which till then I had not experienced. This agreeable and unexpected condition induced the train of thought which determined me. It seemed to offer the explanation of a fact which is one of daily observance, that actual disparities of fortune are not the governing occasions of the felicity or misery of men.

I reflected that the true life of man is within him, while that which he derives from without is only adventitious and subservient. He is immeasurably more influenced by objects in accordance with the circumstances in which they find him, than in accordance with their own nature. During the whole period of a life which is subject to their unending modifications, it is possible for him to become their result. But in this ever-shifting series, it is he only who abides in spite of change, whilst the outward things related to him are transformed entirely; it follows that each one of the impresses which they make on him depends far more, as concerns his felicity or misfortune, on the condition in which it finds him, than either on the sensation which it occasions or the change for the time which it effects in him. To be that which he ought is thus in each specific moment of his life what is vital above all things to man. The advantageous adjustment of his surroundings takes a lower rank; it is a benefit of a subordinate grade for any given moment. But the succession of these impulsions becomes in their aggregate the true originals of the inward motions of man, and hence, if each one of such influences be singly almost neutral,

their sum total does not the less constitute our destiny. Is everything of equal importance in this round of reciprocal relations and effects? Is man, whose absolute liberty is so dubious and his ostensible liberty so restricted, compelled to exercise a constant option demanding an unwavering will, ever free and powerful? Whilst he can control so few events, and can so little govern the majority of his own inclinations, is it essential for the peace of his life that he should foresee all, should direct all and determine everything with so much solicitude that, even if successful invariably, it must still be the torment of that life? Should it be equally essential to control these two motions with their uniformly mutual operation, but if this, notwithstanding, should exceed the powers of man, and if the very effort necessary to produce it be diametrically contrary to the ease which is anticipated therefrom, how can we most closely approximate to this result while renouncing the impracticable means which at first sight seemed alone capable of ensuring it? The solution of this problem would be the grand achievement of human wisdom, and the prime object which could be offered to that inward law which impels us to seek for happiness. To this enigma I thought that I had found an elucidation corresponding to my present needs; perhaps they helped to my acceptance of it.

I considered that the first condition of things was most vital of all in this oscillation which is reacting incessantly, and in consequence invariably draws less or more from that first estate. I reflected: Let us before all be that which becomes us; let us take up that position which suits our nature, and then give way to the current of events, striving only to be preserved in conformity with ourselves. Thus, whatever may bechance, free from all alien anxieties, we shall determine outward things, not by their transformation

in themselves, which to us matters little, but by ruling their influence upon us, which is alone of consequence, is the most easy to accomplish, and does more to maintain our being by restricting and returning upon itself the conserving effort. Whatsoever be the effect which is produced on us by that absolute influence of things which is not to be changed by us, we retain always in the last resource much of the impulse that was originally imparted, and thereby we approximate more than we could otherwise hope for to the happy perseverance of the wise.

So soon as man begins to reflect, from the moment that he ceases to be borne away by the first appetite and the unconsidered laws of instinct, all equity and morality become to some extent a question of casting-up, and caution consists in the calculation of the greater or the less. I thought that I could discern in my conclusion as clear a result as that which follows a procedure with numbers. Since I am giving you an account of my intentions, and not of my mind, and am far less concerned in justifying my decision than in indicating how I reached it, I shall not attempt to render a better account of my reckoning.

In conformity with this point of view, I abandon the remote and manifold anxieties of the future, which are always so exhausting, and often so vain: once, and for all life, I devote myself solely to the disposition both of myself and of outward things. I do not in any sense dissemble how far this work is likely to remain incomplete, or how much I may be deflected by circumstances, but I shall at least do all that is in my power.

I have deemed it necessary to change things before changing myself. This initial enterprise may well be achieved more quickly than the second, and it was not in accordance with my old way of life to be concerned seriously about myself. The alternative of the crucial

moment in which I found myself, drove me to ponder first of all over external alterations. It is in the exemption from outward influences, as in the silence of the passions, that it is possible to examine ourselves. I seek a refuge among these still mountain places, which, in their distant view, impressed my early years. I have no notion where I shall halt, but write to me at Lausanne.

LETTER II

LAUSANNE, *July* 9 (I).

It was night when I reached Geneva, and I took up my quarters in a none too cheerful hostel, where my windows opened on a courtyard. The arrangement did not displease me. On my entrance into so glorious a country I deferred willingly the kind of surprise which is attendant on a novel pageant. Wishing to enjoy it in its fulness instead of reducing its effect by a gradual experience, I kept it for the brightest hour of the morning.

On leaving Geneva I set forward, solitary, free, devoid of precise end, with no other guide than a passable map which I carry about me.

I was starting on my independent life. I was about to take up my abode in perhaps the one country of Europe where, in a climate of moderate clemency, the scenic wildness of natural situations may still be found. Soothed by the very effect of that energy which had been aroused by the conditions of my exodus, satisfied in the possession of my true nature for the first time in the course of my nugatory days, looking for simple and sublime enjoyments with the eagerness of a youthful heart, and that sensibility, the fruit, at once bitter and precious, of my prolonged weariness, I was fervid and yet tranquil. I was

happy under the shining sky of Geneva, when the sun, soaring above the lofty snows, unfolded before me this matchless region. It was in the vicinity of Coppet that I beheld the dawn, not in barren beauty, as I had seen it times out of number, but invested with a loveliness so grand and exalted, that the veil of illusion fell once more before my dejected eyes.

You are unacquainted with this country which, according to Tavernier, can be compared only with a single place in the East. You can form no exact notion concerning it. The majestic effects of Nature can never be pictured as they are. Had I less realised the augustness and accordance of the whole; had not the translucid air invested it with an aspect which words fail to portray; had I been other than I am, I might attempt to bring before you these snow-bound and flaming pinnacles, these clouded vales, these black scarps of the Savoy slopes, the hills of Vaux and the lesser Jura, perhaps too beaming, but overshadowed by the Alps of Gruyère and Ormont, and the vast waters of Leman, and all the movement of its waves, and all its measured serenity. Possibly my inward state added lustre to these places; no man perhaps has experienced in their presence all that was felt by me.

It is the faculty of far-reaching sensibility to derive more intense delight from its own impressions than from positive enjoyments; the latter make known their limits, but those which promise this sentiment of an illimitable power are vast like it, and seem to body forth that unknown world which we are for ever seeking. I should hesitate to affirm that the man whose heart has been lacerated by habitual sufferings may not be endowed by his very wretchedness with a capacity for pleasures which are unknown to the happy, and possess over theirs the advantage of a greater independence and a

permanence which supports even old age. For myself, in this moment, which needed only another heart to beat in unison with my own, I experienced how much one hour of life outvalues a year of existence, how relative is all within us and without us, and how our misfortunes are consequent in the main on our misplacement in the order of things.

The high road from Geneva to Lausanne is pleasant throughout; for the most part it follows the shores of the lake, and it led me towards the mountains. I had no thought of leaving it, nor did I pause till, approaching Lausanne, on a slope, with the town out of sight, I awaited the close of day.

The evenings are unpleasant at the inns, except when the fire and the twilight help out the time till supper. When the days are long, this tiresome hour can be avoided only by eschewing travelling during the heat, which is just what I failed to do. Since my time at Forez it has been my habit to journey afoot when the country is attractive, and once I am on the way, a species of impetuosity forbids my pausing till I am almost at the end of my excursion. Conveyances are essential to carry one quickly along the dusty highway and the rutted and miry tracks over the plains, but enfranchised from business and abroad in the real country, I see no need to travel by post, and one is shackled too much by taking one's own horses. I confess that an arrival on foot is not just at first so well received at the inns, but it is only a matter of moments for a host who knows his business to distinguish some dust on the shoes from a pack on the shoulders, and that there is sufficient prospect of emolument to make him uncover with a due air of respect. You will soon find the servants inquiring, much as they would do to any one: "Has the gentleman given his orders?"

I was under the pines of Jorat; the evening was enchanting, the woods were still, the air was placid, the summit softened but not clouded. All seemed stationary, illumined, statuesque, and even as I raised up my eyes, long fastened on the moss where I reclined, I experienced an august fantasy which was prolonged by my musing mood. The steep slope stretching downwards to the lake was hidden from me by the rising ground on which I sat, and the surface of the lake, as if sloping steeply, seemed to lift up its opposite bank in the air. Mists partly invested the Savoy Alps, which appeared to merge into them and to be draped in the same hues. The glow of the setting sun and the vacant space of air in the depth of Valais exalted these mountains, isolating them from earth by screening their base; and their vastness, void of conformation or complexion, obscure and snow-clad, was imaged forth as a concourse of tempestuous clouds hanging out in space. There was no longer any earth save that which held me up over vacancy, alone, in the midst of the illimitable.

Such a moment befitted the first day of a new life; I shall know few like it. It was my intention to finish by chatting to you quite at my ease, but sleep is weighing alike on hand and head. These memories, or the luxury of imparting them, can stave it off no longer, and I will abandon thus feebly translating what I have felt so keenly.

Hard by Nyon I had an unclouded view of Mont Blanc, from its apparent foundations upward; but the time was by no means propitious, it was badly lighted.

LETTER III

CULLY, *July* 11 (I).

I have little ambition to scour Switzerland in the capacity of a tourist or curiosity seeker. It is my wish to be here because I feel that I should not be at my ease elsewhere; this is the one country bordering on my own which affords, speaking generally, some of those things that I need.

In what direction I shall turn I am still undecided; knowing nobody, and having ties of no kind herein, my choice can be ruled only by considerations borrowed from the nature of the localities. In those which I should prefer the Swiss climate is an impediment. I shall require some settled retreat for the winter season, and this is the first point that I must determine; but long winters characterise these high regions.

I was told at Lausanne: Here is the choicest part of Switzerland, and that which is preferred by all foreigners. You have seen Geneva and the shores of the lake; you have still to see Iverdun, Neufchâtel and Berne; Locle also is usually visited, being famous for its industrial art. As for the rest of the country, it is altogether wild; one gets over the English passion for exhausting and imperilling one's self in order to contemplate ice and sketch waterfalls. Fix your quarters here; the pays de Vaud is the only region which is suited to a foreigner; and in the pays de Vaud there is only Lausanne, above all for a Frenchman.

I gave them my full assurance that I should not select Lausanne, and they regarded me as highly ill-advised. In the pays de Vaud there are conspicuous beauties, but I am convinced beforehand that, as regards its greater portion, it is one of those places which I shall least care for in Switzer-

land. The country and the people are pretty much the same as elsewhere, and I am in search of other manners and a new nature. If I were acquainted with German, I think it possible that I might go to Lucerne, but French is understood only in a third part of Switzerland, and this third is exactly the most vivacious and the least removed from French customs, all of which things occasion me profound indecision. I have very nearly determined to see the shores of Neufchâtel and the bas Valais, after which I might turn towards Schwitz, or into the Unterwalden, notwithstanding the grave obstacle of a language with which I am wholly unfamiliar.

Having noticed a little lake, which is called de Bré or de Bray in the maps, and is located at some height in the regions above Cully, I repaired hither with the idea of visiting water-sides that are almost unknown, and remote from frequented roads. This project I have foregone. I fear that the district will prove simply mediocre, and that the ways of the country-folk, so near to Lausanne, will suit me even less.

I had intended to cross the lake, and yesterday chartered a boat to take me over to the Savoy side. This design I have also had to relinquish; the weather has been bad all day, and the surface of the water is still greatly disturbed. The storm itself is now over, the evening fine. My windows open on the lake; the white spume of the surges is flung from time to time into my room; it has even splashed the roof. The wind is blowing from the southwest, in such a way that it is here exactly that the waves are at their strongest and highest. Believe me that this motion and these measured sounds impart a strong impetus to the soul! Had I to come out from ordinary life, had I to make my own way in the world, and did I feel depressed notwithstanding, I should ask only for

a quarter of an hour by myself before a storm-tost lake; it would scarcely, I think, be the great things of existence which would not come natural to me.

I am looking with considerable impatience for the answer which I have asked you to give me, and though it cannot reach me as yet, I am continually on the point of sending over to Lausanne in case they have omitted to forward it. Beyond doubt it will tell me in no undecided way all that you think sincerely, along what lines you forecast the future, and whether, seeing what I am, I have erred in doing that which for many others would have been a very thoughtless course to pursue. I have taken your advice upon trifles, and my most important resolution independently. For all that, you will not refuse to give me your opinion, which must either depress or encourage me. You have already forgotten that in this instance I have made my plans as if I wished to conceal them from you; a friend's misdeeds may be present in our thoughts but not in our feelings. I congratulate you on having to forgive me a few weaknesses; without this I should not have as much pleasure in relying on you; my own strength would fail to afford me the palladium of your own.

I write to you just as I should speak, much as one talks to himself. Sometimes we have nothing to say to one another, and yet we feel the need of conversation; it is at such times that we gossip most at our ease. I know of no walk which is so truly enjoyable as one which is without object, when the walk is for the sake of walking, looking round without wishing for anything, in an unruffled and almost cloudless hour, free of business, indifferent about time, reconnoitring, as by chance, the wilds and woods of some unknown country. The talk runs on mushrooms, on deer, and on the dry leaves beginning to fall. Perhaps I turn to you and remark: "Here is a spot which is almost

the counterpart of one where my father stopped nearly ten years ago to play a game of quoits with me, and where he left his hunting-knife, which was not to be found next day." And then in your turn you tell me: "Just where we crossed the brook is a place which would have pleased my own parent. Towards the close of his life he would drive a full league from the town into a dense wood where there were rocks and water; he would alight from the carriage and, sometimes alone, sometimes with me for his companion, take his seat on a rocky boulder. Together we would read the 'Lives of the Fathers of the Desert,' and he would say to me: 'Had I entered a monastery in my youth, in obedience to my call from God, I should have escaped the disappointments which have been my lot in the world, I should not be to-day so infirm and broken; yet I should have had no son, and, in dying, should have left nothing behind me on the earth.'" . . . And now he is no more! Both of them are dead and gone!

There are men who imagine themselves to be walking in the country when they are proceeding in a straight line down a dusty lane. They have dined, let us say, but they will take a turn just as far as the statue and then go home to backgammon. We, on the contrary, when we were lost in the woods of Forez, went forward free and at random. There was something of solemnity in those memories of a time, then already remote, which seemed to revisit us amidst the denseness and grandeur of the forest. How the soul is enlarged when she meets with things beautiful and at the same time unforeseen! I would not have all that is hers pre-arranged and regulated. Let the mind be permitted to pursue its quests in a methodical manner, and to systematise that which it performs; but for the heart, it should not toil: insist on it producing, and it will bring forth nothing; cultivation only makes it barren.

Recollect the letters which were written by R. to L., whom he denominated his friend. There was not a little wit in those performances, but of unconstraint nothing. Each individually constituted a distinct thesis and turned on a special subject; every paragraph contained its own object and its proper thought. It was prepared as if for the press, like the sections of a didactic treatise. We are not, I think, very likely to follow this example. Where is our need for wit? When friends converse, it is to say anything that comes into their heads. There is only one feature that I stipulate for on your part: let your letters be long; give time to your writing, so that it may take me time in the reading. For myself I shall often furnish the precedent. As to their contents, I am under no apprehension; that which we think and feel we shall say of necessity, and is not this just what we should say? When people prepare for a gossip are they careful to premise: Talk about this, talk about that; divide the subject, begin at that point or at this?

Supper came in as I sat down to write, and they are lamenting that the fish is cold, or will, at least, be good eating no longer. And so farewell. It is trout from the Rhone; they have been singing its praises, as if they did not know well enough that I am to eat alone.

LETTER IV

THIEL, *July* 19 (I).

I have been on to Iverdun; I have seen Neufchâtel, Bienne, and the vicinity. I am staying some days at Thiel on the frontier of Neufchâtel and Berne. At Lausanne I took one of those hired coaches which are so common in Switzerland. I did not fear the tediousness of a convey-

ance; I was too much taken up with my situation, my hopes so doubtful, the uncertain future, the present already useless, and the emptiness past all bearing which I find everywhere.

I am sending you a few lines written at various points on the road.

AT IVERDUN.

I rejoiced for a moment to feel myself free and amidst scenes so lovely. I thought to find a better life among them, but I will confess to you that I am not satisfied. At Moudon, in the heart of the pays de Vaud, I asked myself: Should I lead a happy life in these places, so extolled and so sought after? But a profound weariness drove me onward immediately. Subsequently I endeavoured to deceive myself by referring this sensation chiefly to a depressing feature of the place. Moudon is well timbered and scenic, but then there is no lake. I decided to stay the night at Iverdun, trusting by its shores to recover that sense of ease, intermingled with melancholy, which I prefer to gladness. The valley is beautiful, and the town one of the prettiest in Switzerland, but notwithstanding the scenery, notwithstanding the lake, notwithstanding the loveliness of the day, I have found Iverdun sadder than Moudon. What manner of surroundings must I have?

AT NEUFCHÂTEL.

This morning I left Iverdun, sweet town that it is, in other eyes so pleasant, but mournful in my own. Why it was so I do not yet understand altogether; I know only that to-day finds me in another frame of mind. If I had to defer the choice of a retreat such as I require, I would more willingly spin out a whole year at Neufchâtel than a month at Iverdun.

AT SAINT-BLAISE.

I am back from an excursion in the Val de Travers. There I began to realise more fully what kind of country I am in. The shores of the lake of Geneva are indisputably fine, and yet it seems to me that similar beauties might be found elsewhere, and, so far as concerns the people, it is quite certain that in themselves and that which belongs to them, they are similar to those of the plains. But this valley, hollowed out of the Jura, has the seal of simplicity and grandeur; it is full of wildness and yet of life; it is at once calm and romantic, and though it has no lake, it has impressed me more than did the shores of Neufchâtel or even of Geneva. Here the land seems to be less under the dominion of man, while man himself is less given over to paltry conventions. The eye is not so incessantly beset by ploughed fields, vineyards and villas, the fallacious wealth of so many unfortunate countries. But large villages, but stone-built houses, but quest, vanity, appellations, wit, the caustic vein! Whither do empty dreams carry me? At every pace the illusion comes and goes; one hopes and is discouraged at each step; and is in constant mutation in this land so different not only from other places but from itself. I go on to the Alps.

AT THIEL.

I reached Vevey by way of Morat, and did not propose to make a stay here, but yesterday I was struck at my awakening by the most magnificent spectacle which morning can produce in a country, the characteristic charm of which is, notwithstanding, more pastoral than majestic. Hence I have been led to tarry here for a few days.

My window remained open all night, in accordance with my custom. Towards four in the morning I was aroused

by the brightness of the dawn, and by the fragrance of new-mown hay, cut during the cool hours in the light of the moon. I expected some ordinary scene, and stood in amazement for a moment. The rains of the solstice had maintained the abundance of water previously accumulated by the well-spring of the snows of Jura. The space between the lake and Thiel was almost completely flooded; the highest spots formed insulated pastures in the midst of these plains of water ridged by the cool morning wind. Far driven by the wind over the half-submerged shore might be seen the waves of the lake. She-goats and cows led by their herdsman, drawing rustic sounds from his horn, passed at the moment along a tongue of dry land which remained between the flooded plain and Thiel. Stones placed at the most difficult points afforded or continued this kind of natural causeway. It was not possible to discern the grazing ground which these tractable beasts were destined to attain, and by their tardy and vacillating gait it might be thought that they were making for the lake, to be submerged therein. The heights of Anet and the dense forests of Julemont rose from the breast of the waters like an island still wild and uninhabited. The mountainous chain of Vuilly skirted the lake on the verge of the horizon. Towards the south the expanse was prolonged behind the slopes of Montmirail; and beyond all these objects sixty leagues of æonian ice imposed on the whole country the matchless grandeur of those bold features which constitute the sublime in scenery.

I took my dinner with the toll-collector, who rather pleased my humour. He is a man more inclined for smoking and drinking than for rancour, scheming and self-torment. I seem to tolerate in others some habits which I have no intention of adopting. They are a

refuge from weariness; they help to fill up the time without the trouble of taking thought to fill it; they dispense one from many things that are worse, and in place of that repose of felicity which is seen on no face, they imprint at least that of a sufficing distraction which conciliates all, and is opposed only to the acquisitions of the mind.

I took the key with me in the evening, so that I could return late without being troubled as to time. The moon had not yet risen, and I strayed the length of the green waters of Thiel. But feeling disposed for continued dreaming, and finding in the warmth of the night an excuse for passing the whole of it in the open air, I took the road to Saint-Blaise, leaving it at a little village, named Marin, which has the lake on the south, and descending a steep slope to recline on the sand, where the waves broke and expired. The air was serene, no veil of mist was visible on the lake. All things slept, some in forgetfulness of their toils, others in that of their sorrows. The moon rose, I tarried a long time, and about morning it poured upon the earth and the waters the ineffable sadness of its last glories. Very grand seemed Nature when, amidst prolonged meditation, there was heard the roll of the waves upon the deserted shore, in the calm of a night still glowing and still enlightened by a dying moon.

Indescribable tenderness, charm and torture of our empty days; vast consciousness of a Nature which is everywhere overwhelming and everywhere inscrutable; universal passion, advanced wisdom, voluptuous abandonment: all that a mortal heart can hold of deep needs and deep weariness, all these did I feel, all pass through on that ineffaceable night. I took an ominous stride towards the age of decadence; I consumed ten years of my life. Happy is the simple man whose heart is for ever young!

There, amidst the repose of the night, I questioned my doubtful destiny, my perturbed heart and that unimaginable Nature which, including all things, seems notwithstanding to exclude what is sought by me in my yearnings. Who am I then? I asked myself. What mournful blending of universal affection and indifference for all ends of actual life? Does imagination impel me to seek in a fantastic order for objects preferred solely because their visionary substance, susceptible of arbitrary mutation, assumes in my eyes the specious forms of ideal beauty, free from still more fantastic alloy?

Thus, observing correspondences in things which can scarcely be said to subsist between them, and for ever seeking that which I shall never obtain; an alien amidst veritable Nature, a laughing-stock in the midst of men; I shall be foredoomed always to vain inclinations, and whether in life I follow my own bent or the will of others, in extrinsic oppression or in my private constraint, I shall have nothing but the eternal torture of an existence which is always repressed and always miserable. But the extravagances of an inflamed and inordinate imagination are as much without stability as without control: sport of the ebb and flow of his passions, and of their headlong and unstemmed fervour, such a man will know neither continuity in his tastes nor tranquillity in his heart.

What should I share in common with him? All my tastes are consistent; what I love is unaffected and natural; I would form only simple habits, serene friendships, and follow an unvaried life. How should my yearnings be disorderly? I observe in them only the need, the consciousness of harmony, and of the fitness of things. How should my inclinations be hateful to other men? I love only that which the best of them have also loved; I seek what all may have, what is necessary to the wants of all, what

would put a period to their wretchedness; I seek only the life of the good, and my peace in the peace of all.

True it is that I love Nature only, but for this very reason I do not by any means love myself exclusively, even in my self-love, and other men are comprised in that Nature which I love the more on account of them. A despotic emotion attaches me to all lovable impressions; my heart, full of itself, of humanity and of the primeval harmony of beings, has never known personal or fiery passions. I love myself, but as within Nature, as in the order that she wills, as associated with the man whom she wills, as associated with the man whom she begets, and in consonance with the totality of things. In truth, unto this present at least, nothing which exists possesses my affection fully; an inexpressible emptiness is the unfailing characteristic of my thirsting soul. But all that which I love might be, earth in its fulness might exist after my own heart, without anything being transformed in Nature or in man himself, excepting the transient contingencies of the social order.

No, not of such is the eccentric man. His extravagance has artificial causes. There is no connection or harmony in his affections, and seeing that the erroneous and the incongruous are in human innovations exclusively, all the objects of his distraction are derived from that order of things by which the insensate passions of men are excited, and the persistent fermentation of their minds for ever agitated in contrary directions.

For myself I love things which are, and I love them as they are. I desire not, seek not, conceive not anything outside of Nature. Far as my thought may go astray and direct itself towards austere or fantastic objects, towards things that are remote or extraordinary; and conscious only of apathy towards that which is offered ready

and at hand, that which Nature normally produces, I aspire to what is refused me, things strange and rare, unlikely circumstances and a romanesque destiny; still, on the other hand, I ask through all my life that alone which Nature contains of necessity, which men should all possess, which alone can occupy our days and satisfy our hearts, in a word, that which comprises life.

As I do not need things that are difficult of attainment, or are reserved for a few, so also I require not things new, variable, or manifold. That which has once pleased will please me permanently; what has once sufficed for my wants will answer for them through all time. Any day like another day which proved a happy one is also happy for me; and as the peremptory needs of my nature are always pretty much the same, seeking that only which they exact, I desire invariably much about the same things. Supposing that I am contented to-day, I shall be the same to-morrow, to the year's end, and throughout my whole life, while, if my lot be uniform, at the same time my wishes are so simple that they can never fail to be fulfilled.

The love of power or of riches is scarcely less foreign to my character than are covetousness, revenge, or hate. There is nothing which should estrange others of my kind from me; I am a competitor with none of them; I can no more be jealous of them than I can hate them; I should repudiate that which misleads them, reject the opportunity to prevail over them, and I do not wish even to transcend them in merit. I confide in my natural goodness. Happy in the fact that I need few efforts to prevent me from doing evil, I shall not torture myself unnecessarily, and on condition that I am an honest man I shall not assume to be a virtuous one. Virtue is, in itself, very considerable, but I am so fortunate that it is not indispensable, and I shall abandon it to others, which is to destroy the sole

emulation possible between them and me. Their virtues are ambitious like their passions; they parade them ostentatiously, and what they seek by their means is above all the primacy. I am not in the lists against them, not even for that prize. What shall I lose by relinquishing such pre-eminence in their favour? Among the qualities which they designate virtues, those alone are helpful which are native to the man who is constituted as I find myself to be, and as I would willingly believe that every man is originally; for the others, they are complex, arduous, imposing, arrogant, and they in no sense derive immediately from the nature of humanity, for which reason I perceive them to be either false or vain, and am little desirous to earn the merit thereof, as, to say the least, it is uncertain. I do not stand in need of exertion to attain what belongs to my nature, and have no wish to expand it so that I may compass what is opposed thereto. My reason rejects such a course, and gives assurance that, for me at least, these pretentious virtues would be adulterants and the beginning of perversion.

The sole effort which is asked of me by the love of what is good, is a confirmed watchfulness which never suffers the canons of our counterfeit morality to win entrance into a soul that is too upright to be adorned by them externally, and too simple to receive them within it. Such virtue I owe to myself, and such only I enjoin thereon. I feel irresistibly that my inclinations are natural; it remains only for me to watch myself vigilantly, and to turn aside from their general direction every particular impulsion which could intermix therewith, to preserve myself ever simple and ever upright in the midst of the everlasting mutations and upheavals which the tyranny of a hazardous condition and the subversions of so many variable things may have in store for me. It is my duty,

whatsoever may befall, to abide the same always, myself for ever, not absolutely as I am in those habits which are opposed to my needs, but that which I feel myself to be, that which I wish to be, that which I am in that inward life, which is the sole refuge for my sorrowful affections.

I will question myself, and I will sift myself; I will probe this heart which is naturally leal and loving, but which so many mortifications may well have already discouraged. I will decide what I am, let me say rather, what I ought to be, and this state once clearly discerned, I will strive to maintain it through my whole life, convinced that nothing which is natural to me is either perilous or reprehensible, assured that no one is ever good unless he is in accord with his nature, and resolved to restrain those of my inclinations alone which tend to falsify my original disposition.

I have known the zeal of arduous virtues; in my arrogant misconception I thought to substitute this equally illusory motive for the illusive motives of social life. With impassive stability I braved misfortune as I braved the passions, and I was convinced that I should be the happiest of men if I became the most virtuous. The deception lasted in its full force for nearly a month, but a single incident dispelled it. Then all the bitterness of a faded and fugitive life flowed down to fill my soul in the dereliction of the last juggle which imposed on it. Since that moment I make no pretence to employ my life, I seek only to fill it; I no longer desire to enjoy, but merely to suffer it. I do not exact that it should be virtuous, but only that it should never be culpable.

And this even, where shall I hope for it, where secure it? Where shall I find those spacious, natural, well-used, regular days? Where be insured against misfortune? No more than this I desire. But what a destiny is that where sorrows abide, where joys are found no more!

Some tranquil days will perchance be afforded me, but no more days of enchantment, days of ecstasy; never a space of pure delight—never! And I am not yet twenty-one years of age! And I came into the world sensitive, sanguine! And I have never known enjoyment! And after death. . . . Nothing left in life, nothing in Nature. . . . I did not weep; I possess no longer the gift of tears. I feel that I have become congealed. I rose, I walked, and activity was serviceable to me.

Insensibly I recurred to my first quest. How shall I regulate myself? Can I do so? And what surroundings shall I select? How, in the midst of men, can it be possible to live otherwise than they, yet how be remote from them on this earth which they exhaust to its remotest corners? Even that which money cannot purchase is only insured by money, and thereby alone can that which it procures be avoided. The fortune which I might attain is wasting; that which I have is precarious. My absence perhaps will consummate the loss of all, and I am not of the kind to carve out for myself a new destiny. As to all this, however, I believe that things must be permitted to take their course. My situation depends on conditions which are yet remote as to consequences. It does not by any means follow that even at the expense of the present I could secure the means of disposing at my will of the future. I shall wait; I will give no ear to an unprofitable prudence which would devote me afresh to that weariness that has passed beyond bearing. But here and now it is impossible for me to arrange for always, and to assume a defined position or an invariable way of life. I must needs procrastinate, it may be for long to come; and so slips life away. Still must some years be surrendered to the freaks of destiny, to the concatenation of circumstances, to counterfeit expediency. I am about to live as

by chance, devoid of any definite scheme, waiting for that moment when I shall be able to pursue the plan which alone befits me. Happy shall I be if, in the time which I renounce, I succeed in preparing a better one; if I can select for my future life its localities, its way, its customs; if I can govern my inclinations, restrain myself, keep back in detachment, and within the bounds of a fortuitous compulsion, this eager and simple heart, to which nothing will be granted; if I can school it to find nourishment in its deprivation, to repose in the void, to keep at peace in this hateful silence, to subsist amidst the dumbness of Nature.

You who know and you who understand me, but, happier and wiser, give way without impatience to the conventions of life, you comprehend what in me, amidst the estrangement in which we are doomed to live, are the needs which cannot be satisfied. There is one thing at least to comfort me, that I possess you: here at least is a sentiment which will not pass away. But, as we have invariably agreed, it is indispensable that my friend should feel in unison with myself; that our lot should be one; that our life should elapse together. How often have I lamented that we do not stand thus in relation to each other! With whom could an unconditional familiarity be so sweet or so natural for me? Have you not been to me heretofore my second nature? You recall that admirable dictum: *Est aliquid sacri in antiquis necessitudinibus.* I regret that it was not uttered by Epicurus, or even by Leontius, rather than by an orator. You are the support upon which I love to lean amidst the inquietude which misguides me, whither I love to return when I have ransacked everything and find that I am alone in the world. Could we live together, could we be sufficient to one another, then should I cease my wanderings, then

enter into rest; I should achieve something on earth, and real life would begin for me. But I must needs wait, I must needs quest, I must press on towards the unknown, and, all unconscious whither I am speeding, flee away from the present as if I had something to expect from the future.

You forgive my retirement, you justify it even; and notwithstanding, lenient as you are to strangers, you do not forget that friendship exacts more stringent justice. You are right, it should, by the force of circumstances. I look only with a species of indignation on that egregious existence which I have left, but I do not deceive myself as to that which awaits me. I enter with dismay upon years full of incertitude, and draw sinister auguries from the impenetrable cloud which broods in front of me.

LETTER V

SAINT-MAURICE, *August* 18 (I).

I have deferred writing to you until I had a fixed abode; my arrangements are now made, and I shall spend the winter here. Prior to that season I shall contrive a few trifling excursions, but as the autumn advances I shall cease to move about.

I was to have visited the canton of Friburg and entered le Valais through the mountains, but I was compelled by the rains to repair to Vevey, by way of Payerne and Lausanne. It was fair weather when I entered Vevey, but had it been otherwise, I could not have been persuaded to continue my way by coach. Between Lausanne and Vevey there is an undulating road, nearly always on the slope, and flanked by small vineyards which impress me as monotonous, at least in a country like this. But Vevey, Clarens, Chillon, the three leagues between Saint-

Saphorien and Villeneuve, surpass anything that I have seen hitherto. The lake of Geneva is commonly admired on the Rolle side; I do not pretend to adjudicate, but it is at Vevey—at Chillon above all—that it is seen in all its beauty. What can be further desired than this wonderful basin, the view of the peak of Jaman, the Aiguille du Midi, and the snows of Velan, or in face of the high rocks of Meillerie, an eminence rising sheer from the waters, a scarped island, hard of approach, and in that island two or three houses at most! I could scarcely wish to stray farther. Why is it that Nature so seldom offers what imagination suggests to our desires? Is it not that men compel us to imagine and to hanker after that which Nature is not in the habit of forming, while if she chance to have produced it somewhere, they destroy it speedily?

I slept at Villeneuve, a melancholy place in a land so fair. Before the heat of the day I explored the little wooded hills of Saint-Tryphon and the endless orchards which clothe the valley as far as Bex. I roamed betwixt two Alpine chains of great elevation; amidst all their snows I followed a level road through a fertile country, which in remote times seems to have been practically submerged.

The valley watered by the Rhone, from Martigny to the lake, is divided almost in the middle by high rocks clothed with pastures and forests which form the first platforms of the Dent de Morcle and the Dent du Midi, and are separated only by the bed of the river. Towards the north these rocks are partly covered with forests of chestnuts, and above these with firs. It is in such somewhat wild places that I have taken up my abode, at the base of the Aiguille du Midi. This eminence is one of the most beautiful among the Alps; it is also one of the loftiest, if regard be paid to apparent rather than to absolute elevation, and to the striking amphitheatre which

displays all the dignity of its outlines. Following the simple indications of maps and the volume of water, I find no summit, the altitude of which has been determined by calculations of trigonometry, or barometric measurements, which has its base in such deep valleys; and hence I feel that I am warranted in ascribing to it an apparent height, practically as great as that of any other eminence in Europe.

At the sight of these populated, productive, yet wild gorges, I abandoned the road to Italy, which turns off at this point to Bex, and directing my course towards the bridge over the Rhone, I took pathways through meadows of which our painters scarcely dream. The bridge, the castle and the course of the Rhone, form at this point a highly picturesque scene; for the town itself, a certain simplicity was all that I remarked therein. There is a suggestion of melancholy in its situation, but of the kind which I like. The mountains are fine, the valley is smooth, the rocks reach up close to the town and seem to impend over it. The dull roll of the Rhone saddens a region which appears cut off from the rest of the earth, entrenched and shut in on all sides. Though populous and cultivated, it seems nevertheless to be burdened or adorned with all the austerity of the deserts, what time the black clouds darken it, surging about the flanks of the mountains, glooming over sombre firs, colliding, conglomerating, brooding motionless, like a darkling roof; or again, when the day is cloudless and the sun's heat in its concentration ferments the unseen vapours, agitates with feverish ardour all that pants beneath the burning sky, and converts that lovely solitude into a bitter desolation.

The cold rains that I had so recently experienced when I passed the Jorat, which is only a slope near the Alps, and the snows which then whitened the Savoy mountains,

though it was middle summer, made me ponder more seriously on the severity, and more yet on the length of the winters in the elevated portions of Switzerland. I was anxious to combine the mountain grandeur with the climate of the plains, and among the higher valleys I cherished the hope of finding some slopes open to the south, an excellent provision for fine frosty weather, though not of much account as regards the months of mist or the tardiness of spring. Absolutely resolved in any case not to take up my quarters in a town, I considered that I should be abundantly recompensed for disadvantages of this kind if I could be the guest of simple mountaineers in a cow-farm sheltered from cold winds, among pastures, the perennial green of the fir trees, and with a torrent near at hand.

The event has decided otherwise. Here I have met with a pleasant climate, not indeed upon the mountains, but between them. I have allowed myself to be tempted into staying in the vicinity of Saint-Maurice. I will not undertake to say how this has come to pass, and indeed I should be in no little difficulty if I were compelled to account for it.

What, in the first place, you may well regard as incomprehensible, is that the unspeakable weariness which has visited me here during the length of four wet days has materially helped to detain me. I have become enamoured of dejection; as for the winter, what I feared was not the weariness of loneliness, but the weariness of the snow. For the rest, I decided without volition and without choice, by a species of instinct which seemed to warn me that it was to be.

When it became known that I should remain hereabouts, I was the recipient of a number of attentions offered with much courtesy and simplicity. The owner of a charming

house close by the town was the sole acquaintance whom I cultivated. He pressed me to take up my residence on his property, or on others which he mentioned, belonging to friends of his own. But I was in search of a picturesque situation, and a house in which I could reside alone. Fortunately, I realised in good time that if I went over any of these various dwellings, I should be sure to take one out of civility, even if all of them were the reverse of what I was looking for. Subsequently, disappointment over an ill-starred choice would leave me no other reasonable course but to abandon the district altogether. I gave a frank explanation of my feelings, into which my acquaintance appeared to enter, and I betook myself to exploring the neighbourhood, visiting places which pleased me better, and looking for an abode on chance, without even inquiring previously whether there was one to be found among them.

I had been questing for two days, and it was in a country where, in close proximity to the town, there are places no less remote than in the depth of a wilderness, and hence I had only designed to spend three days over a search which I had no wish to prolong further. I had seen plenty of habitations in parts which did not attract me, and numerous charming spots where there were no houses, or only stone-built structures of wretched design. I was prompted to abandon my proposal, when at length I perceived the smoke of a chimney curling from behind a thick cluster of chestnuts.

The waters, the denseness of the shadows, the seclusion of the meadows over all this slope, were to me exceedingly pleasing. But it is inclined towards the north, and as I wished for a more favourable aspect, I should not have halted to observe it, had it not been for the smoke. After numerous windings and the crossing of rapid streams, I

reached a solitary house on the verge of the woods and among the loneliest of meadows. A tolerable abode, a wood-built barn, a kitchen-garden enclosed by a wide stream, two springs of excellent water, some crags, thunder of torrents, undulating ground everywhere, quick-set hedges, profuse vegetation, universal pasture-land far stretching under sparsely scattered beeches and chestnuts, onward to the firs of the mountain: such is Charrières. Before the same evening, I had made my arrangements with the farmer, and subsequently visited the owner, who lives at Montey, half a league farther on. He met me in the most liberal manner. We came to an agreement forthwith, though it was less advantageous to me than his first offer, which could only have been accepted by a friend, while even that which he induced me to take would have appeared magnanimous on the part of an old acquaintance. It would seem that this manner of acting must be natural in certain places, and especially in certain families. When I mentioned it subsequently to his relation at Saint-Maurice, I did not notice that it surprised any one.

I must make the most of Charrières before the approach of winter. I must be there when the chestnuts are gathered, and I must by no means lose the tranquil autumn-time.

Twenty days hence I go into possession of the house, the grove of chestnuts and a part of the meadows and orchards, surrendering the remainder to the farmer, together with the kitchen garden, the ground reserved for hemp, and above all the ploughed land.

The part which I have retained for myself is traversed by the stream in a circular direction. It is the least profitable part of the land, but it is the most rich in shady recesses and secluded nooks. The growth of moss interferes with the hay-crop, the chestnuts are too thickly planted and yield but little fruit, and no view has been opened over

the long valley of the Rhone; all is wild about it, and all is abandoned. They have even neglected to clear a space between the rocks, where trees, uprooted by the winds and consumed by decay, choke up the mud and form a kind of dam; alders and hazels taking root therein have made the passage impenetrable. The stream notwithstanding filters through all this refuse, and escapes covered with foam into a natural basin of great purity. Thence it flows on between rocks, rolls its tumbling wavelets over moss, and, slackening its course far down, emerges from the shadows to glide in front of the house under a bridge of three fir-planks.

It is said that wolves, driven by the accumulating snows, come down in the winter in search of bones and the remains of the meals which are necessary to man even in pastoral valleys. Dread of these animals has long left this abode uninhabited. For myself it is not they whom I shall fear. May I rather be left free by man, at least in the vicinity of their dens!

LETTER VI

SAINT-MAURICE, *August* 26 (I).

A single moment suffices to transform our affections, but those moments are rare.

It was yesterday. I deferred writing to you till the morrow; I did not wish this perturbation to subside so quickly. I felt myself on the point of getting in touch with something real. I experienced, as it might be, joy. I let myself go; it is always good to feel what that means.

Do not laugh at me because I behaved for a whole day as if I had lost my reason. I was very near, I assure you, being such a simpleton as not to have kept up my absurdity for a quarter of an hour.

As I was entering Saint-Maurice a travelling coach drove up slowly and several persons alighted at the bridge. You will know already that a woman was of the number. My French guise apparently attracted notice: she bowed to me. Her mouth is full, her glance. . . . As to her figure, as to all else, I know as little of these as of her age; about all this I am not anxious; it may even be that she is not remarkably pretty.

I did not observe the inn to which they were going, but I remained at Saint-Maurice. Mine host (the same whom I stay with always) must, I suppose, have placed me at the same table because they are French; if I recollect, he suggested it. You may guess whether I ordered something choice for dessert, so that I might offer it.

I passed the remainder of the day by the Rhone. They are leaving this morning for Sion on the road to Leuck, where one of the party is going to take the baths. It is said to be a lovely road.

How astonishing is the dejection in which a man of some natural power allows his life to waste when so little can draw him from his apathy!

Do you think that any one who reaches man's estate without having fallen in love, has truly entered into the mysteries of life, that his heart can be really known to him, or the extent of his existence unveiled? It seems to me that he has remained in a state of deprivation, and has only beheld from afar what the world might have been for him.

I make no reserve with you; you at least will not say, See now, he is in love! May that foolish remark, which either renders him who speaks it ridiculous, or him of whom it is spoken, be never uttered concerning me, I trust, by other than fools!

When one or two glasses of punch have dissolved our

acclivity, I failed to attain the summit, the face of which could scarcely be called inclined, while it soared above the point I had reached apparently some five hundred feet.

Though I had crossed little of the snow, as I had taken no precautions against it, my eyes were tired by its glare, scorched by the reflection of the noonday sun from its frozen surface, and I could barely distinguish objects. Moreover, many of the heights which I perceived are unknown to me, and I could be sure of the most conspicuous only. Since I came into Switzerland, I have read nothing but Saussure, Bourrit, the *Tableau de la Suisse* and so forth, but I am still a great stranger in the Alps. I could have no doubt all the same about the gigantic summit of Mont Blanc, which rose up in evidence before me; that of Velan; another more remote and exalted, which I suppose to be Mont Rosa; and the Dent de Morcle on the farther side of the valley, facing me close at hand, but lower down, beyond the abysses. The height which I had failed to scale did much to interfere with what is perhaps the most striking part of this vast perspective, for behind it stretched the long profundities of Valais, bordered on either side by the glaciers of Sanetz, Lauter-Brunnen and the Pennines, and terminated by the domes of Gothard and of Titlis, the snows of Furca and the pyramids of Schreckhorn and Finster-aar-horn.

But this prospect of mountain-tops invaded by the feet of man, this view so grand, so impressive, removed so far from the monotonous nullity of landscapes in the plains far down, was not what I sought, all the same, in untrammelled Nature, in the hushed immobility, in the pure air. At lower levels it is inevitable that the natural man should be subject to continual mutation, breathing a social atmosphere so dense, so stormy, so full of ferment, in continual perturbation from the clamour of the arts, the jar

of pretended pleasures, the cries of hatred and the everlasting moanings of anxiety and suffering. But up there, on those desert peaks, where the sky is more vast and the air more stable, where time flies slower and life has more of permanence: there does all Nature proclaim with eloquence a lordlier order, a more visible harmony, an eternal unison. There is the form of man adaptable and yet indestructible; he breathes the wild air far away from social emanations; he belongs to himself and to the universe, and lives with a true life in the glorious unity.

This was the experience which I desired, this, at least, which I sought. Deficient in confidence of myself, amidst an order of affairs arranged at enormous expenditure by ingenious children, I went up to demand of Nature why I am amiss in the midst of them. In a word, I would ascertain whether my existence is alien in the human order, or whether the actual social regimen is receding from the everlasting harmony, as a kind of irregularity or accidental exception in the movement of the world. Now, at length, I feel sure of myself. There are moments which scatter distrust, prejudgments, uncertainties, when we know that which is by an autocratic and unalterable conviction.

Be it so therefore! Miserable and almost ridiculous, I shall live upon an earth enslaved by the caprices of this ephemeral world, opposing to my weariness the conviction which sets me inwardly in proximity to man as he might be. And if there should cross my path some inflexible character whose nature, formed on the primordial model, cannot be made passive to social imprints; should the chance of things, I say, permit me to meet with such a man, be sure that we shall understand one another; he will be surrendered to me, and I shall be his for ever; our relations with the world at large will be transferred to one another, and free of the rest of our race, and pitying their empty

necessities, we shall pursue, if it be possible, a more natural and more equal life. Who could affirm, all the same, that it would be one of greater happiness, devoid as it must remain of harmony with outward things, and encompassed by the suffering nations?

No words of mine could impart to you a just notion of this new world, nor express the immutability of the mountains in a language of the plains. The hours seemed to me at once more tranquil and more fruitful, and, as though the revolution of the stars had been slackened in this all-holding calm, I discerned in the measured pace and intensity of my thought a sequence which nothing precipitated, while it yet outstripped its normal course. When I sought to compute its duration I found that the sun had not kept pace with it, and I concluded that the consciousness of existence is in reality more burdensome and barren in the whirl of the haunts of men. I perceived that, in spite of the tardiness of apparent motions, it is among the mountains, in the repose of their peaks, that thought, less harried, is more truly active. The man of the valleys consumes, without enjoying, his unquiet and fretful span, like those insects ever on the wing, who expend their efforts in vain gyrations, to be left behind by others no stronger but more tranquil in their direct and sustained flight.

The day was torrid, the horizon was fuliginous, the valleys were vaporous. The glister of the glaciers filled the lower atmosphere with their luminous reflections; but an unknown purity seemed essential to the air which I breathed. At this altitude no exhalation from beneath, no accident of light ruffled or divided the vague and sombre profundities of the heavens. Their apparent colour was no longer that pale and luminous blue; their soft vesture on the plains, a grateful and delicate combination, forming

for the habitable earth a visible circumference whereon the eye can linger and rest. Here the indiscernible ether allowed sight to lose itself in limitless immensity; amidst the glory of the sun and of the icy peaks, to go in search of other worlds, other suns, as under the vast sky at night; and beyond the atmosphere kindled with the fires of day, to penetrate a nocturnal universe.

Vapours rose insensibly from the glaciers and formed clouds under my feet. The snowy brilliance no longer tired my eyes, and the sky became still more sombre, still more profound. A mist covered the Alps; some isolated peaks alone issued from that sea of vapours; brilliant streaks of snow retained in their rugged clefts made the granite masses more black and austere by contrast. The hoary dome of Mont Blanc lifted its irremovable mass above that ashen and shifting ocean, above those crowded hazes rent by winds and cast up in immense billows. A black point showed suddenly in their abysses, rapid in motion, coming straight toward me; it was the mighty eagle of the Alps, with dripping wings and ravenous eye, seeking for prey, but at the sight of man he took flight with an ominous scream, and casting himself into the clouds, he vanished. That cry was re-echoed some score of times, by harsh noises, devoid of all protraction, like so many isolated cries in the universal silence. Thereafter all subsided into absolute calm, as if sound itself had ceased to be, as if the quality of sonorous bodies had been erased from the universe. Never has true silence fallen on the unresting vales; alone on the chill peaks there reigns this immobility, this solemn permanence which tongue can never express, imagination never attain. Save for memories brought up from the plains, it would seem impossible for man to believe that, outside himself, there could be any movement in Nature; the course of the stars would be inexplicable, and, even to

the mutations of the clouds, all would appear to abide even amidst change itself. Each present moment seeming unbroken, he would have the certitude but never the sensation of the succession of things; and the everlasting variations of the universe would be an impenetrable mystery to his thought.

I could have wished to have preserved some surer record, not of my general impressions amidst these spheres of muteness, for they will in nowise be forgotten, but of the ideas which they occasioned, and of these there is scarcely any trace in my memory. In places so exceptional imagination can with difficulty recall an order of thought which seems to set aside all present objects. It would have been necessary to write down what I experienced, but then I should have speedily ceased to feel after an unusual manner. In this anxiety for the preservation of thought so as to recover it subsequently, there is something of servility, akin to the cares of a dependent life. Very seldom in the moments of energy do we give heed to other times and persons, to factitious conventions, to renown, or even public usefulness. We are more natural, and do not think even of redeeming the actual moment, do not hold our ideas under command, have no wish to reflect, do not coerce the mind to investigate any subject, manifest secret things, or find out what remains unexpressed. Thought is not active and regulated, but passive or liberated; we dream and surrender ourselves, are profound apart from reason, great without enthusiasm, energetic independently of will; we muse, but we do not meditate. Be not therefore astonished that I have nothing to impart to you after six or more hours of sensations and ideas which the whole course of my life may possibly never bring back. You know those people of Dauphiné were frustrated in their design when they went botanising with Rousseau. After reaching

a summit which, by its position, seemed adapted to kindle poetic genius, they awaited some choice flower of eloquence; but the author of "Julia" took his seat on the ground, toyed with some blades of grass and said nothing.

It might have been five o'clock when I noticed how the shadows had lengthened, and experienced some cold in the corner open to the West where I had remained motionless so long upon the granite. I felt unable to move, and the way was long and arduous among scarps like those. The mists had melted, and I saw that it was a beautiful evening, even in the valleys.

Had the vapours thickened, I should have been in a real danger, but the fact had not occurred to me till that moment. The stratum of grosser air which envelops the earth seemed quite foreign to me after the pure air that I had breathed on the confines of the ether: all prudence had forsaken me, as if this also were a convention of the artificial life.

As I returned to the habitable earth, I felt that I was reassuming the long chain of anxieties and weariness. When I arrived it was ten o'clock; the moon was looking in at my window. The Rhone flowed noisily, but there was no wind, and all in the town were asleep. I dreamed of the mountains which I had left, of Charrèires where I was to live, of the freedom to which I had laid claim.

LETTER VIII

SAINT-MAURICE, *September* 14 (I).

I am back from a sojourn of many days in the mountains. Of this I shall say nothing; I have other things to tell you. I met, however, with one overwhelming situation and promised myself to revisit it frequently. It is at no great distance from Saint-Maurice. Before retiring to rest, I broke the seal of a letter which was not in your writing. The

word *Immediate* written in large characters occasioned me some concern. All seems suspicious to him who has freed himself with difficulty from long-enduring bondage. In seclusion like mine, no alteration could be otherwise than repugnant. I had nothing advantageous to anticipate, and I might well have much to fear.

You will, I think, have little difficulty in divining the purport of that communication. For myself I was borne down, overwhelmed. At first I decided to ignore all, to rise above all, to surrender definitely whatsoever might hold me to the things which I have left. Nevertheless, after many doubts, better grounded or more infirm, I seemed to recognise the necessity of sacrificing a certain proportion of time so as to assure my immunity in the future. Therefore I yield; Charrières I abandon, and I am preparing to set out. We will discuss the untoward affair.

This morning I could not tolerate the thought of so great a change, and I even had recourse to further deliberations. In the end I repaired to Charrières, to make other arrangements and announce my departure. There at length I reached an unalterable decision. My desire was to banish the image of the approaching season, and of the weariness which already began to weigh upon me. I was in the meadows, which were being mown for the last time. I paused to rest upon a rock where I could see the sky only, and this was veiled in thick mists. I beheld the chestnut trees; I looked on the falling leaves. Then I approached the brook, as if I feared that this also had become dry, but it ran the same for ever.

Inscrutable compulsion of human things! I go to Lyons, and afterwards I shall go to Paris. So much for
ıt has been settled. Farewell! Compassionate the man
inds so little, and from whom even this little is taken
To conclude—at least, we shall meet at Lyons.

LETTER IX

LYONS, *October* 22 (I).

I left for Méterville two days after your departure from Lyons. There I spent eighteen days. You know what anxieties encompass me, and by what sordid miseries I am embarrassed, without any compensation that I can promise myself as the result of all. But, awaiting a letter which could not come to hand for a fortnight, I went to while away this period at Méterville.

If I am unable to remain apathetic and unruffled amidst the weariness with which I am compelled to concern myself, and the issue of which appears to be dependent on me, I at least feel capable of forgetting it absolutely as soon as I can do nothing in regard to it. I know how to await the future with equanimity, whatever may impend, from the moment that the distress of anticipating it, taxing no longer my immediate vigilance, permits me to suspend memory and avert thought therefrom.

In fact, I should scarcely seek for the palmiest days of my life a deeper peace than the immunity of this brief interval. It has been snatched, notwithstanding, between solicitudes, the issue of which cannot be foreseen. And after what manner? By means so simple that they would excite laughter in many who will never know such repose.

The place of itself is unimportant and more retired than impressive in its situation. You are familiar with its owners, their characters, their way of life, their unaffected friendliness, their endearing manners. I visited them at a fortunate moment: they were to begin on the morrow the harvesting of the grapes upon a great trellis open to the south and looking towards the forest of Armand. It was arranged

over the supper-table that these grapes, designed for a special vintage, should be gathered by our hands alone, and with such care that the fruit less advanced should be allowed a few extra days for maturing. The next morning accordingly, when the mist had somewhat lifted, I placed a winnowing fan on a wheel-barrow, and was the first in the heart of the vineyard to start the harvesting. I was almost alone in my labour and sought for no speedier method, preferring this dilatory way. The advent of any fellow-worker brought me a regretful feeling. The harvesting lasted, I think, twelve days. My barrow passed and repassed over the neglected ways carpeted with moist grass. I chose the most scattered, the most difficult, and thus the hours slipped by in oblivion, amidst the autumn sunshine, all among mists and fruit. And then, when the evening came, we brewed our tea with milk still warm from the cow, laughed at those who go in pursuit of pleasures, strayed under the old yoke-elm hedges, and retired to our rest contented. I have beheld the vanities of life, and I bear within me the fiery principle of colossal passions. I bear also the consciousness of the grandeurs of social things, and I confess to the philosophical order. I have studied Marcus Aurelius without any astonishment at his maxims. I can conceive the austere virtues and even the monastic heroism. All this can animate my soul, yet fill it not. The barrow, which I heap up with grapes and wheel at leisure, sustains it better. It seems to carry my hours peaceably, as if this slow and serviceable motion, this measured progress, were adapted to the common habit of my life.

LETTER X

PARIS, *June* 20 (*Second Year*).

Nothing comes to an issue; the miserable business which holds me in durance here drags on from day to day, and the more I chafe at the procrastination, the more doubtful the end becomes. Men of business pursue their objects with the coolness of persons who are inured to impediments, and relish in addition a tardy and embarrassed progress, which reflects credit on their mental astuteness and is well suited to their private stratagems. I should have more evil to recount to you if they were guilty of less to me. Besides, you know what I think of this vocation, which I have never swerved from regarding as the most questionable or baneful of all. A lawyer is now leading me from complication to complication; believing that I also must be self-interested and devoid of rectitude, he traffics for his own side. By outwearying me with delays and formalities, he fancies that he will drive me to grant what I cannot accord because I do not possess it. Hence, after passing six months at Lyons against my will, I am still fated to spend perhaps as many here.

Meanwhile the year glides on: there is one more to blot out from my existence. I lost the spring almost without a murmur—but summer in Paris! Part of the time I spend over the abominations inseparable from what is termed looking after one's affairs, and afterwards, when I would be in peace for the rest of the day, and have recourse to my lodging as a kind of asylum against all this long-drawn weariness, I find another weariness more intolerable still. There I am in silence which is in the midst of riot, and I alone have nothing to do in a turbulent world. There is no mean here between utter unrest

and inaction; one is bound to be weary in the absence of business or the passions. I am in occupation of a room shaken by the perpetual reverberation of every species of clamour, by every craft and disquiet of an indefatigable people. Beneath my window there is a kind of market-place, swarming with quacks, jugglers, fruit-sellers and hawkers of all descriptions. Over against me is the high wall of some public edifice, on which the sun glares from two o'clock in the afternoon until evening. This dazzling and barren pile cuts off the blue sky sharply, and the brightest days are for me the most insufferable. One persistent vender shouts the names of his newspapers, his harsh and unvaried voice seeming to add to the aridity of this sun-scorched place; and if I hear a laundress singing at her window under the roof, I lose patience and go out. For three days past a crippled and ulcerous mendicant has located himself at the corner of a street close by me, soliciting alms, with uplifted and lachrymose voice, for twelve long hours at a stretch. Imagine the effect of this wailing reiterated at equal intervals through days of unbroken sunshine. Till he changes his post, I must henceforth remain the whole day out of doors. Yet whither can I repair? Here I know very few people, and among so few it would be a great chance if I should meet with one to my taste. As for the public resorts, there are many that are very fine in Paris, but not one which I can frequent for half-an-hour without finding it tedious.

I know of nothing which so burdens our days as this everlasting dilatoriness of all things. One is kept incessantly in a state of expectation, and life slips away before it is possible to reach the point at which living can be pretended to begin. Notwithstanding, about what shall I complain? How few are the people who do not squander their existence? And what of those who pass it in

dungeons provided by the mercy of the laws? How can any one endure to go on living when he has to drag out twenty years of his youth in a prison? He can form no conception how long he must still remain there, were even the hour of emancipation at hand! I forgot those who would not dare end it of their own accord: men at least have not permitted them to die. And we dare to lament over our own lot!

LETTER XI

21. PARIS, *June* 27 (II).

I pass fairly often a couple of hours in the library, not exactly for my instruction—that ambition cools sensibly—but because, knowing scarcely how to fill up the time which, for all that, glides on irreparably, I find it less irksome when I employ it outside than when I wear it away indoors. Pursuits which are to some extent regulated are more in consonance with my dejection than an excess of licence which would leave me inert. I experience greater tranquillity among persons who are silent like myself, than when alone amidst a boisterous crowd. I am drawn towards those long halls, some vacant, some peopled by assiduous students, that antique and chill storehouse of human efforts and of all human vanities.

When I dip into Bougainville, Chardin, Laloubère, I become imbued with the old memory of time-worn lands, with the rumour of far-off wisdom, or the youth of the fortunate isles; but at length forgetting Persepolis, Benares and Tinian itself, I focus times and places at the actual point whence human faculties perceive them all. I behold those eager minds who acquire in silence and toil, whilst the eternal oblivion, rolling over their learned and spellbound heads, brings close inevitable death, and prepares to

obliterate in one instant of Nature their existence, their thought and their age.

The halls encircle a long, peaceful, grassy court with a few statues, a cluster of ruins and a basin of green water, seemingly as old as the effigies. I leave rarely without pausing for a few minutes in this hushed enclosure. I love to muse as I stray over time-worn stones which were once drawn from their quarries to provide for the feet of man a dry surface free of all vegetation; but time and solitude have replaced them, in a sense, beneath the earth by covering them with new soil, and restoring to the ground its vegetation and the hues of its natural complexion. I find these stones occasionally more eloquent than the books which I have been just admiring.

When consulting the Encyclopædia yesterday, I opened the volume at a page which I was not looking for, and I have now forgotten the article, but it told how a man, outworn by perturbations and mischances, betook himself to absolute solitude by one of those determinations which overcome impediments, and are food for daily self-congratulation at the possession of a will with sufficient fortitude to make them. The conception of this independent life has recalled to my imagination, not the untrammelled solitudes of Imaüs, not the soft isles of the Pacific, not the less inaccessible Alps, already regretted so much, but a distinct memory has presented to me, after a striking manner, and with a kind of wonder and inspiration, the arid rocks and the woods of Fontainebleau.

I feel that I must speak to you further of a place which is to some extent exotic in the heart of our countrysides. You will then realise better why it is so strongly endeared to me.

You are aware that, while still young, I made a stay of some years at Paris. The relations with whom I lived,

notwithstanding their attachment to the city, frequently spent the month of September with friends in the country. One year they stayed in this manner at Fontainebleau, and twice subsequently we visited the same people, who at that time lived on the borders of the forest in the vicinity of the river-bank. I believe that I was fourteen, fifteen and seventeen years old respectively when I thus made acquaintance with Fontainebleau. After a stay-at-home, slothful and tedious childhood, if I felt myself a man in certain respects, I was yet a boy in many others. Shy, hesitating, prescient perhaps of everything, but knowing nothing, alien to that which surrounded me, I had no other decided characteristics than those of unrest and unhappiness. On the occasion of my first sojourn I never went alone into the forest; I recall little that I experienced, but am convinced that I preferred it to anything that I had ever beheld, and it was the only place which I had any wish to revisit.

The year following I scoured the solitudes eagerly, happy when I had lost purposely all trace of my road and could discern no beaten track. If I reached any limit of the forest I beheld with regret the vast, bare plains beyond it, and noted the steeples in the distance. I retired quickly, plunged once more into the heart of the woodland, and then if I came upon a clearing encompassed on all sides, where I could see only sand-heaps and junipers, I experienced a sensation of peace, of freedom, of wild exultation, the power of Nature realised for the first time at an age which is quick to happiness. At the same time, I was not gay, and, falling short of full felicity, I had rather an emotion of comfort. I grew weary through enjoyment, and returned depressed invariably. On many occasions I was in the forest before sunrise. I clambered summits still in shadow, I drenched myself amongst heather wet with dew,

length of the forest and descended to Valvin, beneath those trees, in that silence, I seemed on the point of being lost among torrents, morasses, romantic and appalling places. What I found were hillocks of sandstone, meagre outlines, a level region which could scarcely be called picturesque; but silence, abandonment and sterility have sufficed me.

Can you appreciate the delight which I experience when my foot sinks into a shifting and scorching sand, where progression is difficult, where there are no waters, no coolness, no shadow? I behold a silent and uncultivated expanse, ruinous, disfigured, chaotic rocks, and the powers of Nature given over to the power of time. Is it not as if I were at peace, when outside me, under the ardent sky, I find other hindrances and other excesses than those of my own heart?

I seek not to know where I am; on the contrary, I lose myself when that is possible. Very often I pursue a straight line, taking no notice of beaten tracks, doing my best to ignore directions, and not to become familiar with the forest, so that I may always have something to discover in it. There is one road which it is my special pleasure to follow; like the forest itself, it takes the form of a circle, so that it leads neither to plain nor town; it describes no ordinary course; it is neither of the valleys nor of the heights; it appears to have no end and to go nowhere. I feel that I am following it all my life.

One is bound, you will say, to return in the evening, and you jest at my so-called solitude; but you deceive yourself; you think that I am at Fontainebleau, in a village or in a cottage. Nothing of the sort. In such places as this I care for the country seats no more than the villages, and for the villages no more than the towns. If I condemn ostentation, I detest squalor. Were it otherwise, I

should have done better to remain at Paris, for there I should have found both.

Now here is a point which I did not mention in my last letter, filled as it was with the ferment which works at times within me.

Once in the past, while exploring these woods, I came in a thicket upon two hinds flying from a wolf, who was hard on them, and must, it would have seemed, overtake them. I advanced from the same side to watch the struggle and give help if possible. They dashed out of the wood into an open space where there were rocks and brushwood, but on my coming up they were lost to sight. I explored all parts of this species of ridged and irregular waste, where much freestone had once been quarried for paving, but I discovered nothing. Taking another direction, to plunge again into the forest, I encountered a dog, who watched me at first in silence, and only barked when I moved away from him. I had paused, in fact, almost on the threshold of the dwelling which he guarded. It was a sort of underground cavern, part of which was enclosed naturally by the rocks, and part by piles of freestones, branches of juniper and heaps of bracken and moss. An artisan who for more than thirty years had been a stone-hewer in the neighbouring quarries, and was devoid of property or family, had retired thither to abandon compulsory toil before he was abandoned by life, and to escape humiliation and the hospitals. I saw that he possessed a cupboard. Hard by his particular rock he cultivated a few vegetables in a very barren soil, living thus, with his dog and his cat, on bread, water and freedom. I have done hard work, he said to me, and have never possessed anything; but in the end I have found peace, and, for the rest, I shall die before long. Thus was human history summed up to me by this humble man. Could he be aware of the fact? Did he think that any

one was happier? Did he suffer by comparing himself with others? Into these points I made no inquiry. I was very young at the time. I was fascinated by his rustic and half-civilised air. When I offered him a crown he accepted it, saying that he would be able to buy some wine, and I must confess that this intention diminished my esteem. Wine! I exclaimed to myself; there are surely more serviceable things. Possibly wine and misconduct have brought him to this pass, rather than the love of solitude. Your pardon, simple man and unfortunate solitary! Not yet had I learned that one may drink oblivion of sorrows. I know now the bitterness which afflicts and the loathings which consume our powers, and I can respect one whose most crying need is to cease for a moment from sorrowing. Rather I am indignant at hearing the man of an easy life upbraid an unfortunate severely for drinking wine when he is wanting bread. What soul have such persons received if they know not a keener pang than that of being hungry!

You can now understand the force of the recollection which returned to me unexpectedly in the library. I was inspired by this sudden idea with all the feeling of a real life, of a wise simplicity, of the independence of humanity in the midst of a nature which belongs to it.

Do not suppose that I mistake my present existence for a life of this kind, or that I look upon myself as a man after nature, here in the midst of my sandstones and surrounded by sorry plains. After the fashion of a dweller in the Quartier Saint-Paul, I might as well show my neighbours the rural beauties of a pot of mignonette beneath the eaves, of a window-box full of parsley, or dignify half a rood of ground circled by a brook with the names of the promontories and sea-board solitudes belonging to another hemisphere, so as to recall grand

associations and remote customs amidst the stucco and thatched roofs of a rural parish.

But seeing that my fate is invariably to be waiting for life, I endeavour to vegetate absolutely alone and isolated; I have preferred very much to spend four months in this manner than to lose them at Paris in other puerilities which are at once greater and more sordid. I must tell you when we meet how I have chosen a manor, and how I have farmed it; how I have thither transported my few effects without letting any one into my secret; how I support existence on a few vegetables and fruits; where I find my water; how I am clothed against the wet, and all my varied provisions for safeguarding my concealment, so that no Parisian, passing eight days in the country, can come hither to scoff at me.

You also laugh, but that I condone, for your mirth is not like theirs, and I have myself forestalled your humour. I find all the same that this sort of life possesses great charms, when, the better to appreciate its advantages, I sally out of the forest, betake myself to the cultivated lands, and observe at a distance some pretentious mansion situated in the open country; when, after a weary and barren league, I perceive a hundred cottages crowded hideously together, where streets, stables and kitchen-gardens, walls, ceilings and dripping roof, even to garments and furniture, are permeated by the same squalor, in which all the women yell, the children scream and the men sweat. And if I search through so much degradation and misery for some element of moral peace, some vestige of religious hopes, for these unfortunates, I find, for the patriarch of the place, a rapacious priest soured by disappointment and separated too soon from the world; or otherwise some morose young man, without dignity, wisdom, or unction, who commands no respect, whose way of life is well

known, who damns the erring without consoling the good; and for the one symbol of hope and of concord, a sign of terror and abnegation, an anomalous emblem, the melancholy survival of antique and great institutions which have become miserably perverted.

There are men, notwithstanding, by whom all this is taken tranquilly, not dreaming that it is capable of being approached from another point of view.

O sad and vain conceit of a better world! Unspeakable longing of love! Regret for times which pass and produce nothing! Universal sentiment, sustain and absorb my life! What would it be, devoid of thy sinister beauty? In thee is it felt, and by thee will perish.

Yet a few times under the autumn sky, in these last fine days which mists suffuse with vagueness, seated by the waters which bear away the yellow leaf, let me hear the simple and profound accents of a primitive melody. Ascending Grimsel or Titlis, alone with the dweller in the mountains, let me hear one day, on the short grass, with the snows hard by, the familiar romantic sounds of Underwalden and Hasly; once before death may I there say in the ear of one who will understand me: "If we only had lived!"

LETTER XIII

FONTAINEBLEAU, *July* 31 (II).

When some invincible sentiment takes us far from the things which we possess and fills us at first with ravishment and then with regret, giving glimpses of felicities which nothing can really impart, this profound though transient sensation is but an inward witness to the superiority of our faculties over our

destiny. It is for this very reason so brief, and converted so quickly into regret. It is first delicious, then agonising. All extravagant impulse is followed by dejection. We are not that which we might be, and hence we suffer; yet did we find ourselves in the midst of that order which our aspirations seek and miss, we should possess no longer this excess of desire, this superfluity of gifts. We should enjoy no more the pleasure of being greater than our destinies, above that which environs us, more productive than we are required to be. In the fruition of those delights which our imagination conceives so ardently, we should remain frigid and often preoccupied, indifferent, even wearied, because it is impossible for any one to be really more than himself, because we are confronted then by the infrangible limit assigned by the nature of things; and our faculties, engrossed by actualities, avail no longer to transport us into the beyond, the imagined region of ideal objects, under the empire of the real man.

But why should such objects be ideal exclusively? It is this which I fail to comprehend. Why is that which has no actual existence more in consonance with our nature than that which is? Positive life is also as a dream merely; it is this which is void of coherence, of sequence, of end; definitive and fixed elements it does indeed possess, but there are others also which belong only to chance and discord, which melt like shadows, and in which no one finds that which he anticipates. Thus in our sleep we encounter things which are true and consequent simultaneously with others which are fantastic, disjointed, chimerical, but are yet interweaved, I know not how, with the former. A similar medley makes up the dreams of night and the sensations of day. Antique wisdom has affirmed that the hour of waking will at length arrive.

LETTER XIV

FONTAINEBLEAU, *August* 7 (II).

M—— W——, whom you know, remarked recently: "When drinking my cup of coffee, I arrange the world to admiration."—I also encourage this kind of dreaming, and as I rove through the brushwood, among still humid junipers, I surprise myself sometimes picturing men who are happy. I assure you, it seems to me that they might be so. I have no desire to constitute another species or a new globe; I have no wish to reform everything; such hypotheses lead nowhere, say you, since they are without application to what is known. Very well; take what exists necessarily; take it just as it is, rearranging the accidental only. I ask for no chimerical or novel species; here are my materials, after which I fashion my scheme, in accordance with the conception in my mind.

I stipulate for two things: a settled climate and true men. If I knew when the rain would cause the rivers to overflow, when the sun would scorch up my plants, when the hurricane would demolish my house, it would be for my diligence to cope with the natural forces which are hostile to my needs; but if I am in the dark as to their advent, if mischances overtake me without any warning of danger, if prudence may itself be my ruin, if the interests of others confided to my charge forbid me carelessness and deny me even security, is not my life inevitably one of solicitude and wretchedness? Is it not equally inevitable that inaction should follow enforced labour, and that, as Voltaire has so well observed, I should consume all my days either in feverish activity or in the lethargy of weariness?

If men are for the most part dissemblers, if the duplicity of some must compel others, at the very least, to cautiousness,

is it not unavoidable that with the necessary evil which numbers seek to inflict upon their fellows for their personal advantage, there should be combined a much greater proportion of useless miseries? Is it not unavoidable that men should by turns torment one another, in their own despite, that all should look askance at all, each be forearmed against each, that enemies should be full of devices, and friends of wariness? Does it not follow that a single heedless action or one false judgment may ruin the man of good intentions in the public esteem; that an enmity originating in a groundless suspicion may become fatal; that those who seek to do well are disheartened; that false principles take root; that trickery is more profitable than wisdom, heroism, or high-mindedness; that children reproach their fathers for not having played the roué; and that states perish because they have abstained from a crime? In this perpetual uncertainty I would ask what becomes of morality, and again, in this uncertainty of all, what becomes of surety? Without surety, without morality, I ask whether happiness is not a dream of childhood?

The moment of death should continue to remain unknown. There is no evil apart from duration, and for a score of other reasons death must not be included in the number of misfortunes. It is well to be in ignorance of the hour wherein all must end. What it is certain that we cannot accomplish we initiate but rarely. Taking man therefore pretty well as he is, I should require that his ignorance as to the length of life should be useful rather than disadvantageous; but uncertainty as to the things of existence is not like that of their ending. One event which you have been unable to foresee disorders your scheme and has persistent crosses in store for you; death, on the other hand, in place of impeding, simply destroys your plan, and you can suffer nothing as to that of which you will know

nothing. The schemes of those who survive it may perhaps obstruct, but sufficient is the certitude which concerns a man's own affairs, and I am far from presupposing unmixed good in the things of our race. I should misdoubt a world of my planning if it left no room for evil, and to depict a perfect harmony would fill me only with a species of horror. Such anomalies, as it seems to me, are not tolerated by Nature.

An assured climate and true men, inevitably true—these suffice me. If I know things as they are, I am happy. I leave to heaven its tornados and tempests; to earth its mire and dust; to the ground its barrenness; to our bodies their weakness and degeneration; to men their disparities and incompatibilities, their inconstancy, their shortcomings, their vices even and their unavoidable egotism; to time its tardiness and irrepealability. Happy is the city wherein things are ordered duly, wherein thoughts are known! Beyond these it needs merely good legislation, and it is impossible that this should be wanting if thoughts are known.

LETTER XV

FONTAINEBLEAU, *August* 9 (II).

Amongst a few portable volumes which I have brought with me here, why I can scarcely tell, I have come across the ingenious romance of *Phrosine et Mélidor*. At first I skimmed, then read it, and the end I have read a second time. There are seasons for sorrows, when we love to go in search of them within us, to probe their depths and to marvel at their unmeasured proportions; we experiment, at least, amidst our human miseries, with that infinite which we would ascribe to our shadow before a breath of time effaces it.

That pitiable moment, that disastrous situation, that nocturnal death amidst mysterious delights! All amidst those darksome hazes, what love, what loss, what terrifying vendettas! And that rending of a betrayed heart when Phrosine, battling with the waves to reach the rock and torch, lured on by a faithless beacon, perishes exhausted in the vast sea! I know of no finer catastrophe, of no death more lamentable.

The day ended, and there was no moon, there was no movement; the sky was calm, the trees stirred not at all. A few insects hummed in the grass, a single bird, far off, sang in the warmth of evening.

I sat down, and so tarried a long time. I seem to have had nothing but undefined notions. I passed in my mind through earth and its ages, and trembled at the work of man. Then I revert to myself, to find that I am in this chaos; I see my life lost therein; I forecast the future epochs of the world. Rocks of Righi, had I only possessed your depths!

The night had now deepened; I took my way back slowly, straying as chance directed and filled with all weariness. I knew the whole need of tears, but I could only sigh. The primal times are over; the torments of youth are mine, but not its consolations. My heart, tormented still by the fire of an aimless existence, is dry and withered, as if from the exhaustion of an icy old age. I am quenched without being made calm. There are those who rejoice in their afflictions, but for me all has gone by; I have neither joy, nor hope, nor rest: nothing remains to me, not even tears.

LETTER XVI

FONTAINEBLEAU, *August* 12 (II).

What magnanimous sentiments! What memories! What peaceful majesty in a mild, calm, illuminated night! What grandeur! And yet the soul is steeped in uncertainty. She perceives that her impressions, derived from external things, make her subject to errors; she discerns that there are truths notwithstanding, but that these are very far away. Beneath those mighty worlds sphered in a changeless sky, Nature passes our understanding.

We are confounded by the permanence therein, which is for us a terrific eternity. The things that are about us pass away, and we pass away with them, but the worlds remain! Thought is in the midst of an abyss, between the mutations of earth and the unalterable heavens.

LETTER XVII

FONTAINEBLEAU, *August* 14 (II).

Before the sun has risen I am up and abroad in the woods. I observe how it rises for a fine day. I plunge through bracken still wet with dew, among briars with the hinds about me; I roam under the birch trees of Mont Chauvet. Some emotion of that happiness which was once possible stirs powerfully within me; it impels me and weighs me down. I rise and descend; I walk hurriedly, like one who is in quest of enjoyment, but ah, that one sigh, that mood of fancy, and then a whole day of wretchedness!

LETTER XVIII

FONTAINEBLEAU, *August* 17 (II).

Even in this place it is only the evening that I love. The dawn, it is true, charms me, but it is for a moment only. I believe that I might realise its beauty, were it not for the length of the day which follows it. It is true that I have a free field to roam in, but it is deficient in wildness, it falls short of the august degree. It is tame in its outlines, its rocks are insignificant and monotonous; its vegetation for the most part lacks that force and profusion which are needful to me; there is no roar of any torrent through inaccessible depths; it is a world of plains. Nothing overwhelms me, nothing satisfies me. If possible, my weariness increases—surely it is because my sufferings are insufficient. Am I happier on this account? By no means! To suffer and to be unhappy are not identical conditions; to be happy and to enjoy are also not terms that can be interchanged.

My condition is easy, and yet I lead a melancholy life. I could not well be better off than I am—free, tranquil, faring well, emancipated from business, indifferent as to a future from which I expect nothing, and relinquishing without any regret a past which I have never enjoyed. Yet there is a disquietude within me which will not depart; a want unknown which dominates and absorbs me, which takes me past all perishable existence. . . . You are mistaken, as I was also mistaken—it is not the privation of love. There is a vast distance between the void of my heart and the love which it has desired so much, but there is the infinite between that which I am and that which I yearn to be. Love is great, it is not illimitable. I have no craving for mere enjoyment; it is hope that I ask for, it is knowledge that I would attain! Unbounded illusions are

necessary to me, illusions receding ever to deceive me always. Of what consequence to me is anything that can end? The hour which sixty years hence must come, for me is here already. I dislike that which impends, draws nigh, comes to pass, and then is no more. I seek a boon, a dream, in a word, a hope to go always before me, beyond me, greater than my longing itself, greater than that which passes away. I would encompass all intelligence, I would that the eternal order of the world. . . . And thirty years since, that order was, but I had no part therein!

Fleeting and futile accident, I existed not, and again I shall not exist. I realise with astonishment that my conceptions are greater than my nature, and when I consider that my life is ridiculous in my own eyes I am lost in impenetrable darkness. Happier, no doubt, is the man who hews wood, burns charcoal, and blesses himself with holy water whenever the thunder growls. He lives like the brute. Nay, but he sings at his work! His peace I shall not know, and yet like him I shall pass away. With time his life slips by; the agitations, the anxieties, the spectres of an unknown grandeur delude and hurry forward my own.

LETTER XIX

FONTAINEBLEAU, *August* 18 (II).

There are moments, notwithstanding, when I find myself imbued with hope and the sense of freedom; time and the things of time confront me majestic in their harmony, and a feeling of happiness comes over me, as if happiness might indeed be mine. I surprise myself in the act of reverting to my former years; again I discern in the rose the delight of its beauties, and all its heavenly eloquence.

What, I happy! It is impossible, but I am, notwithstanding, and happy even to plenitude; as he who, starting from some dreadful dream, is restored to a life of peace and freedom; as he who issues from the vile durance of a dungeon, and after ten years looks once again upon the peace of the sky; happy even as the man who loves—her whom he has snatched from destruction. But the supreme moment passes; a cloud before the sun obscures its fruitful light; the birds are silenced. The growing shadow sweeps away my dream and my joy before it.

Then I start walking; I go forward, my pace hastens, but again I return sadly, and presently I re-enter the woods, lest the sun should again shine forth. And yet in all this there is something which soothes and consoles. What is it? I can hardly say, but time does not cease its progress when my suffering lulls me to sleep, and I love to watch the ripening of the fruit which will fall in the autumn wind.

LETTER XX

FONTAINEBLEAU, *August* 27 (II).

How little is essential for the man who is anxious, merely to live, and how much for him who would live in contentment and make use of his days! Happy would he be who had the strength to renounce felicity, confessing that it is too impracticable. But is it necessary to remain always alone? Peace itself is a melancholy boon if one has no hope of sharing it.

There are many, I admit, who can find sufficient permanence in some advantage of the moment, and others can restrict themselves to a mode of life which is devoid of order and taste. I have seen such a person trim-

to visit with our contempt any man who is sufficiently stupid to forsake such a well-known beaten track. For the rest, and in all seriousness, my excuse, as one who has no ambition to copy the cynics, is the fact that I do not take credit for the caprices of a young man, nor do I, in the midst of others, by any direct method oppose my ways to theirs in things which are not enjoined me by duty. I indulge myself in a single eccentricity which of itself is indifferent, but one which, in certain respects, I consider to be for my own good. It might offend some ways of thinking, but this, as it seems to me, is the sole inconvenience which can be suffered, and I conceal it from others in order that the inconvenience may be avoided.

LETTER XXI

FONTAINEBLEAU, *September* 1 (II).

The days are exceedingly beautiful, and I am in supreme peace. There was a time when I should have revelled still more in such utter freedom, such desertion of all business and of every purpose, such indifference about whatever may befall.

I have a growing consciousness that I am advancing in life. Those entrancing sensations, those sudden emotions which moved me formerly, transporting so far from a world of sadness, I find no more, unless alloyed and weakened. That desire which awakened within me every individual sentiment of manifested beauty in natural things; that hope, trembling with uncertainty and charm; that heaven-sent fire which dazzles and devours the youthful heart; that comprehensive delight wherewith it illuminates the vast phantom in front of it; all this exists no longer.

I begin to appreciate what is serviceable and convenient, and no more what is beautiful.

You who are familiar with my unlimited necessities, tell me what I shall make of life when I have forfeited those instants of illusion which sparkled in its darkness like stormy flashes in a foreboding night! That they deepened the gloom, I will grant, but they proved it susceptible of change, and they proved also that the light subsisted still. What shall now become of me if I must confine myself to what is, if I must be restricted to my particular way of living, to my personal interests, to the cares of rising, employing my time, and retiring to rest?

How different I was in those days wherein it was possible for me to love. In my childhood I was romantic, and then again I pictured a refuge in harmony with my tastes. In a corner of Dauphiny, with obvious anachronism, I combined the notion of Alpine grandeurs and a climate of olives and citrons. Finally the name of Chartreuse impressed me; there, in the vicinity of Grenoble, I imagined my abode. I believed at that period that the felicity of places went far towards the felicity of life, and that there, with a woman whom I loved, I should enjoy an unchangeable beatitude, the thirst after which possessed my deluded heart.

Now here is an extraordinary circumstance from which I fail to deduce anything, and about which I will assert only that such is the fact. So far as I am aware, I had seen and read nothing which could possibly inform me as to the locality of the Grande Chartreuse. I knew only that this solitude was among the mountains of Dauphiny. In accordance with this confused notion and my personal leanings, my imagination pictured the site of the monastery and of my abode thereby. It was singularly near to the truth. Seeing, long subsequently, an engraving

representing the place, I exclaimed, before reading the inscription: "There is the Grande Chartreuse!"—so vividly did it recall what I had fancied. And when I found that I was actually right, I trembled with surprise and regret, for it seemed to me that I had lost something which was, so to speak, set apart for myself. Since this project of my early youth I never hear the name of Chartreuse without an emotion that is full of bitterness.

The further that I go back along the years, the more profound are the impressions which I encounter. Passing that age when there is already some comprehensiveness in ideas; if I make search through my infancy for those first fantasies of a melancholy heart which never knew real childhood, which clung to powerful emotions and extraordinary things before it had so much as decided whether games were pleasing or otherwise; if I seek, as I say, what I experienced at seven, six, or five years, I find impressions equally ineffaceable, more confident, more sweet, and made up of those unmingled illusions, the felicity of which is known to no other age.

I make no mistake about the period. I know exactly at what age I thought of certain things or read a particular book. For example, I read the history of Japon de Kœmpfer in my accustomed place by the window of that house in the vicinity of the Rhone which my father vacated shortly before his death. The following summer, I read Robinson Crusoe. It was at this time that I lost the exactitude which had characterised me previously; it became impossible for me to perform without a pen less complicated calculations than I could make when four and a half years old without writing anything, or knowing any rule of arithmetic except addition, a faculty which surprised so much the guests at the house of Madame B—— at a certain reception which you know about.

The gift of perceiving indeterminate relations swallowed up that of combining mathematical relations. I became sensible of moral correspondences: the sentiment of the beautiful was dawning. . . .

September 2.

Seeing that undesignedly I was having recourse to reasoning, I brought myself up sharply. In matters of sentiment we can consult ourselves only; but in things which call for discussion, it is always an advantage to ascertain what has been thought by others. As it happens, I have with me a volume containing the "Philosophical Thoughts" of Diderot, his "Dissertation on the Beautiful," &c. I took it up and went out.

If I follow Diderot, it may be because he is the last who has spoken, which, I admit, counts usually for much; but I modify his thought at my pleasure, for my own utterance is still later than his.

Setting aside Wolf, Crouzas and the sixth sense of Hutcheson, I am much of the same opinion as all others, and for this very reason I do not consider that the beautiful can be defined so briefly and so simply as it has been attempted by Diderot. I believe with him that the sentiment of beauty cannot exist apart from the perception of relations; but of what relations? If we dream of the beautiful when we perceive any given correspondences, this is not to say that we have there and then a perception of it; one only imagines it. Because we perceive relations, we suppose a centre, we think of analogies, we await a new extension of the soul and of ideas; but that which is beautiful does not merely cause us to think of all this by way of reminiscence or by occasion, it contains and shows it forth. It is undoubtedly advantageous when a definition can be expressed by a word, but we must beware lest such conciseness should make it too general and hence false.

I say therefore, the beautiful is that which excites in us the idea of relations disposed towards the same end, in accordance with conformities analogous to our nature. This definition comprises the notions of order, proportions, unity and even utility.

These relations are ordained towards a centre or an end, which makes order and unity. They follow conformities which are nothing else but proportion, regularity, symmetry, simplicity, accordingly as one or another of these conformities proves more or less essential to the nature of the whole that these relations compose. This whole is unity, apart from which there is no result, no work which can be beautiful, because without it there is, in fact, no work. There should be unity in every product: nothing has been accomplished if uniformity is not impressed on our performance.

No object is beautiful apart from harmony; it is merely a combination having a capacity for the production of beauty and unity, when, that being supplied which is now deficient, its elements are reduced into a whole. Till then there are only materials, from the combination of which beauty does not result, though taken separately they may each possess beauty, like detached compositions which, made into a collection, are formless, and do not therefore constitute a work though they are all possibly complete in themselves. Thus, a compilation of moral thoughts, however beautiful, does not form an ethical treatise if there be no connecting link between them.

When this harmony, less or more composite, but one at the same time and complete, has sensible analogies with the nature of man, it becomes of use to him, directly or indirectly. It can serve his needs, or at least extend his knowledge; it may be either a new instrument in his hands, or the occasion of a new industry; it may extend his nature and minister to the eagerness of his restless mind.

There is added beauty, there is true unity, when the conformities which are perceived are exact, when they converge towards a common centre; and if there be nothing more than is required to insure this result, the beauty is greater still because of its simplicity. Every quality is alloyed by the intermixture of a foreign quality; when there is no such adulteration, there is then more precision, symmetry, simplicity, unity and beauty in an object; in a word, it is perfect.

The notion of utility participates, chiefly after two manners, in that of beauty. There is, firstly, the utility of all parts in respect of their common end; and there is, secondly, the utility of the whole in its relation to ourselves, who have analogies therewith.

In the "Philosophy of Nature," we read: "The philosopher, as it seems to me, may define beauty to be the perfect harmony between the whole and its parts." On one occasion you defined it in a note as follows: "The agreement of the several parts of an object with their common destination in conformity with means at once most fruitful and simple." This approximates to Crouzas both in sentiment and manner. He enumerates five characteristics of the beautiful, and thus defines proportion, which is one of them: "Unity tempered with variety, regularity and order in each part."

If anything which is well ordered, which contains that which is analogous to ourselves, and in which we find beauty, should impress us as superior or equal to that which we contain within us, we term it beautiful. Should it seem to us inferior, we then term it pretty. If its analogies with ourselves connect with unimportant matters, which minister, however, directly to our habits and our present desires, we then call it agreeable. But when its conformities are with the things of our soul, when it vivifies

and enlarges thought, when it widens and uplifts the affections, when it exhibits in things external some grand or heretofore unperceived analogies which impart to us the consciousness of universal order, of many beings co-ordinated to one end, it is then that we term it sublime.

The perception of ordained relations begets the idea of beauty, and the expansion of the soul, occasioned by some analogy between them and our nature, is the sentiment thereof.

When the relations indicated convey a sense of the vague and the vast, when we feel far more than we can see their conformities with us and with a part of Nature, a delightful feeling is the result, full of expectation and illusion, an indefinite happiness which promises delights without limit; here is the enchanting and transporting quality of beauty. The pleasing engages thought, the beautiful sustains the soul, the sublime overwhelms or exalts, but that which ravishes and impassions the heart is that still more vague and still more extensive beauty, so little known, ever unexplained, ever mysterious and unexpressed.

Thus, in hearts that are made for love, love adorns everything and permeates all Nature with delight. As it establishes within us the greatest of all relations which can be known without us, it makes us quick to discern all relations and all harmonies; it unveils a new world to our affections. Borne away by that swift movement, allured by that energy which promises everything, and of which nothing can yet disillusionise us, we seek, we feel, we love, we desire all that Nature contains for man.

But then come the disappointments of life to restrain and drive us back upon ourselves. In this retrograde movement we take refuge in the abandonment of external things, and reduce ourselves to our positive necessities—that

focus of sadness, where so much of bitterness and silence, forestalling death, hollows in our hearts that void of the grave wherein is consumed and quenched all that was possessed of candour, grace, desire and early goodness.

LETTER XXII

FONTAINEBLEAU, *October* 12 (II).

I am of course impelled to revisit every scene which I loved to frequent of old, and with this object I am now going in quest of those which are most out of reach before the nights turn cold, the trees are stripped and the birds have migrated.

Yesterday I made a start before daylight, the moon was still shining, and albeit the dawn was breaking, there were shadows discernible. The valley of Changy was still plunged in darkness; already I had attained the heights of Avon. I went down to the Basses-Loges and reached Valvin as the sun, rising behind Samoreau, tinged the rocks of Samois.

Valvin cannot be termed a village, and has no cultivated land. The inn occupies an isolated position, at the base of an eminence, on a strip of flat shore between the river and the woods. I had to put up with the tedium of the coach, an execrable conveyance, and reach Valvin or Thomery by water in the evening when the river-bank is involved in gloom, and the deer call in the forest; or otherwise at sun-dawn when all is still sleeping, when the hinds scatter at the cry of the ferryman, echoing under tall poplars and amidst the misty hills all smoking under the first beams of day.

In a flat country it counts for much if one can come across faint effects like these, which are at least interesting

at certain hours. But the slightest modification dispels them; depopulate the neighbouring woods of their wild beasts, fell the trees on the rising ground, and Valvin will be nothing thenceforward. Even as it is, I should not care to make a stay at it; it is quite an ordinary place in the day-time, and furthermore the inn is not habitable

On leaving Valvin I ascended in a northerly direction, passing a pile of freestone, the situation of which, in an undiversified and shelterless place encompassed by woods and looking to the west, imparts a forlorn feeling blended with an element of sadness. I compared this place as I left it to one near Bourron which made an opposite impression upon me. Finding a striking similarity between the two spots, except as regards their aspect, I could discern at length the reason of those contrary feelings which I entertained towards the Alps at points so apparently similar. Thus Bulle and Planfayon depressed me, though their pastures on the borders of la Gruyère partake of its features, and the characteristics and atmosphere of the mountains are recognisable at once in their scenery. Thus also in the past I regretted my inability to remain in a desert and sterile gorge of the Dent du Midi. Thus once more I experienced all weariness at Iverdun, and, although on the same lake, a remarkable consolation at Neufchâtel. The sweetness of Vevey and the melancholy of the Underwalden are explicable after the same manner, and possibly also the diverse character of every nation. They are modified by the differences of exposed aspects, climates, mists, as much as and more than by those of laws and customs. As a fact, the diversities of these last had themselves similar physical causes in the beginning.

At length I turned westward and went in quest of the spring of Mont Chauvet. With the help of the freestone

which abounds in the locality, a shelter has been contrived to protect this spring from the sun and the sand-drifts. A circular bank has been also built up, on which it is possible to breakfast, the water for this purpose being drawn from the spring. Hunters, pedestrians, mechanics, may be seen there from time to time, and so also may some melancholy company of Parisian lackeys or shopkeepers from the Quartier Saint-Martin and the Rue Saint-Jacques, rusticating in a country town which the king honours by visiting. Hither they are drawn by the water—which is advantageous when a picnicking party meets to discuss cold pasties—and as much by a certain boulder of freestone, naturally hollowed, which is found at a point on the road, and at which they stand agaze. It is known as the confessional, and they make their genuflections in front of it, regarding it, not without emotion, as one of those sports of Nature which, by imitating holy things, bear witness that the religion of the country is the end of all things.

For myself I went down into the retired valley below, wherein this spring vanishes, too feeble to form a stream. Turning towards the cross of Grand-Veneur I came upon a solitude austere as the isolation which I seek. I passed behind the rocks of Cuvier; sadness had entered into my soul; I lingered long in the gorges of Aspremont. Towards evening I drew near to the desert of Grand-Franchart, that old monastery, isolated among low hills and sand-heaps, desolated ruins which, even when remote from men, human vanity consecrated to the fanaticism of humility and the desire of impressing the crowd. Brigands at a later period are said to have replaced the monks, restoring the principles of freedom, to the misfortune, however, of those who were not in the bond of their liberty. Night approached; I made choice of a retreat in a kind of

parlour of the monastery, securing the ancient door. I collected some dry fragments of wood, with fern and other vegetation, that I might not spend the night on the stones. Then I withdrew for yet some hours; the moon was due to shine.

It shone in fact, though feebly, as if to add to the solitude of that vacant pile. Not a cry, not a bird, not a movement interrupted a silence which lasted through the whole night. But when all which oppresses us is suspended, when the sleep of all things leaves us also to repose, there are phantoms which wake in our own heart.

I started at noon on the morrow. A storm began while I was still among the heights, and I watched its approach with much pleasure. At every point the rocks, hollowed or piled one over another, afforded easy shelter. From the depth of a grotto I enjoyed watching how the junipers and birches resisted the fury of the winds, and, denied a fruitful soil or advantageous situation, maintained their free and meagre existence with no other support than the sides of the clefts in the rocks between which they balanced themselves, and no other nourishment than a terrene moisture collected in the fissures into which their roots had forced themselves.

As soon as the rain abated I buried myself among the wet and spangled woods. I followed the edge of the forest in the direction of Reclose, la Vignette and Bourron. Approaching at length the inconsiderable eminence of Mont Chauvet as far as Croix-Hérant, I fared forward between Malmontagne and Route-aux-Nymphes, returning towards evening with a certain regret and yet content with my excursion, if it can be said that there is anything which really affords me either pleasure or regret.

There is a confusion within me, a kind of delirium, which is not that of the passions, nor yet that of madness

it is the disorder of weariness, the discord which that has set up between myself and outward things, the disquietude which long-repressed wants have set in the place of desires.

These I seek no longer, for they have ceased to deceive me. I do not wish for their extinction; such absolute silence would be even more ominous. Nevertheless, they are but the vain beauty of a rose before an eye which will never reopen; they reveal what I cannot possess and can scarcely discern. If hope seems still to cast a gleam into the night which surrounds me, it proclaims only the bitterness that it exhales in departing; it enlightens only the extent of that void in which I have sought, and in which I have found nothing.

Favourable climates, scenes of beauty, nocturnal skies, pregnant sounds, old memories, seasons, opportunity, Nature eloquent in her loveliness, sublime affections, all these have passed before me, all invoke me, and all abandon me. I am alone; the uncommunicated energies of my heart react and pause therein. Behold me in the world, solitary amidst the throng which is to me as nothing, like one long afflicted by an accidental deafness, whose hungry eye is fixed on all those mute beings surging so feverishly past him! He sees all, and yet all is denied him; he divines those sounds which he loves, seeks them and hears them not; he endures the silence of all things in the midst of the rumour of the world. All unfolds before him and he can grasp nothing; in all external things there dwells the universal harmony; it is present to his imagination, but is no longer in his heart; he is cut off from the concourse of the living; there is no communication henceforth. All things for him exist in vain; in vain does all flourish before him; he lives alone; he is as one absent in the living world.

LETTER XXIII

FONTAINEBLEAU, *October* 18 (II).

Will man also know the long peace of the autumn after the agitation of his ruder years? as the fire, so swift to burn out, lingers flickering among the ashes.

Leaves fell in crowds long before the equinox, and yet the forest preserves much of its greenery and an undiminished loveliness. Forty days since seemed truly the end of all at a premature hour; now everything persists beyond its allotted period, obtaining on the brink of destruction a further lease of existence, which pauses on the verge of ruin, full of grace or security, and, decaying by imperceptible stages, seems to cling at once to the rest of the death which approaches and to the charm of the life which is lost.

LETTER XXIV

FONTAINEBLEAU, *October* 28 (II).

When the hoar-frosts disappear I am scarcely aware of it; spring passes without attracting my notice; summer slips by and awakens no regret. But I experience a sense of pleasure when I walk through the despoiled woodland, over the fallen leaves, during the last of the bright days.

To what does man owe the most permanent enjoyment of his heart, that pleasure of melancholy, that charm full of secret things by which he draws life from his sufferings and continues clinging to self even amidst the consciousness of his ruin? Very dear to me is this soft season which will

so soon be over; a belated interest, a kind of contradictory pleasure, draws me to it as it is about to finish. By the same moral law, I am at once repelled at the notion of destruction and drawn by the pity of that which must end before myself. It is natural that we should find more joy in perishable existence when, aware of all its fragility, we yet feel it, enduring in us. When death separates us from things, they go on subsisting without us. But after the fall of the leaves vegetation comes to a standstill; it dies, and we remain for other generations. Autumn is delicious, because spring may return for us again.

While spring is a more beautiful spectacle of Nature, man has so ordered himself that autumn is sweeter in his eyes. New-born verdure, singing-bird and bursting blossom, fire which is rekindled for the affirmation of life, protecting shadows of leafy bowers, lush weeds, wild fruits, favouring nights which make independence possible! Season of delight! I fear you too much in my feverish unrest. I find more repose towards the evening of the year; the season when all seems ending is the one alone in which I sleep at peace in the land of the human.

LETTER XXV

FONTAINEBLEAU, *November* 6 (II).

I am bidding good-bye to my woods. I had some idea of spending the winter among them, but if I am to get quit of the business which brought me to Paris, I must no longer neglect it. I am reminded, impressed, forced to understand that since I tarry quietly in the country I can dispense with any issue being reached. They can hardly suspect how I live, or they would come

to the opposite conclusion, believing that it was with a view to economy.

I fancy, however, that even independently of this I should have decided to leave the forest. To my great satisfaction I have succeeded in remaining undiscovered so far, but smoke would betray me. I should never elude the woodcutters, charcoal burners, or hunters. Moreover, I cannot ignore that I am in a country which is under excellent police supervision. I have further failed to make the arrangements necessary for continuing to live as I have been doing through all seasons. I might well find myself at a loss during heavy snows, thaws and icy rains.

Hence I say farewell to the forest, its movement, its dreaming guise and its faint but tranquil similitude of a free land.

You ask me what I think of Fontainebleau, setting aside, on the one hand, any personal memories which may enhance its interest, and, on the other, the mode in which I have spent my recent time therein.

The place, speaking generally, is not of any great account, and it would take little to spoil its choicest recesses. The impressions afforded by scenes whereon no seal of grandeur has been set by Nature are necessarily variable, and in a certain sense precarious. Twenty centuries are needed to alter one of the Alps; but a northerly wind, the fall of a few trees, a new plantation, comparison with other places, any of these may occasion a great alteration in ordinary scenes. A forest that is full of wild beasts will suffer a great loss if it cease to shelter them, and a place which is merely pleasant will lose still more if beheld with the eyes of a later age.

What I like here is the amplitude of the forest, the majesty of some of its wooded parts, the loneliness of the

little valleys, the freedom of the sandy heaths, the abundance of beech and birch, and in the town its quality of external spruceness and good circumstance, the undeniable advantage of its freedom from dirt, and, what is not less rare, its little visible misery, its broad roads, the variety of its byways, and a host of fortuitous accessories, though in truth too trivial and possessing too much sameness. But a refuge of this kind could only really suit one who has beheld and imagines nothing further. There is no scene of grandeur with which it is possible to compare seriously these level lands devoid of lake or torrent, and having nothing which arrests or engages—a monotonous surface which would be stripped of all beauty, if the woods were cleared —a frivolous and meaningless assemblage of little heathy plains, of small ravines and meagre rocks uniformly consorted—a land of level ways, full of people hankering after an imaginary fortune, and not one who is satisfied with what he has.

The repose of such a spot is only the stillness of a momentary abandonment; its solitude wants wildness. Such a desolation requires a cloudless evening sky, a sky of vagueness but of autumn calm, a ten hours' space of sunshine with a mist before and after. Wild beasts must roam in the solitudes, which are interesting and picturesque when stags are heard belling in the night-time at unequal distances, when the squirrel with its little cry of fear springs from branch to branch in the lovely woods of Tillas. Isolated sounds of living things! Ye do not people the solitudes as misdescribed by the vulgar saying; ye but render them more deep and mysterious; by you are they made romantic!

LETTER XXVI

PARIS, *February* 9 (*Third Year*).

You must be the confidant of all my weakness in order that I may receive your support, for I am plunged in uncertainty; at times I pity myself, and at times I am in the opposite frame of mind.

When I encounter a curricle driven by a woman who resembles her whom I have pictured, I go straight the whole length of the horse till the wheel almost brushes me, and then I observe no more. I fold my arms, bending slightly, and the wheel glides past.

I was in just such a brown study on a certain occasion, my eyes preoccupied without being exactly fixed. She was therefore obliged to pull up; this time I had forgotten the wheel. As for her, she possessed at once youth and maturity; she was very nearly beautiful and altogether gracious. She curbed her horse, smiled almost, and yet seemed unwilling to smile. I still gazed, and, seeing neither horse nor wheel, I surprised myself answering her. . . . I am sure that my glance was already filled with suffering. The horse swerved aside. She leaned over to see if the wheel had not touched me, but I remained in my dream, and a little further on I stumbled against one of those faggots which the fruiterers pile up for sale to the poor. Then I saw nothing more. Is it not time to grow firm, to partake of forgetfulness? I should say, to concern myself with nothing save . . . that which belongs to a man? Must I not abandon all these puerilities which fatigue and enfeeble me?

Willingly would I cast them away from me, but I know not what to set up in their place, and when I say to myself: Now it is time to be a man, I find only uncertainty. In your next letter, define me what it is to be a man.

LETTER XXVII

PARIS, *February* 11 (III).

I am quite at a loss to understand what is intended by the expression "self-love." Those who exhibit the tendency are condemned for possessing it, and yet its possession is regarded as essential. Hence I should be disposed to conclude that this love of one's self, and the expediencies, is in reality good and necessary, that it is inseparable from the sentiment of honour, and that its excesses, like all excesses, being alone dangerous, we ought to consider things which are performed through self-love to be good or bad, as may be, but should not criticise them solely because they are actuated by that sentiment.

But this is not how it works out. Though self-love is a necessary possession, and whosoever is wanting therein is considered a worthless fellow (*pied-plat*), yet on account of self-love we must do nothing. What is good of itself, or at least indifferent, becomes evil when self-love prompts it. Explain me, I pray you, these mysteries, you who are better acquainted than I am with society. It will, I fancy, be more easy for you to answer this question than that of my last letter. For the rest, as you are at war with the ideal, I will furnish an example, so that the problem to resolve may be one of practical knowledge.

A stranger has for some little time been staying in the country at the house of some opulent friends; he owes it, as he conceives, to these friends, as well as to himself, not to go down in the opinion of the domestics, and with this sort of people he supposes that appearances are everything. He has received no visits, has seen no one from town, till one individual, coming by chance, and a relative, proves to be an eccentric of awkward deportment, one whose singular

manner and somewhat common appearance are calculated to give servants the notion of a humble condition. Now no one explains to menials, so that matters cannot be set right by a word; they do not know who you are, but they see that your only acquaintance is a man who cannot deceive them, and at whom they may venture to laugh. Thus the person I speak of experienced not a little vexation. He is the more blamed because a relative was in question. Here at once a character for self-love is established, but at the same time I consider that it is not deserved.

LETTER XXVIII

PARIS, *February* 27 (III).

You could not ask me more opportunely whence comes the expression *pied-plat*. This morning I could no more explain it than you can, and am somewhat afraid that I understand it no better this evening, though I have been told what I am about to repeat to you.

Seeing that the Gauls were subjugated by the Romans, it follows that they were born to serve; seeing that the Franks invaded the Gauls, it follows that they were made to conquer—arresting conclusions!

Now the Gauls or Welsh were unusually flat-footed, while the Franks had uncommonly high insteps. The Franks despised all these flat-feet, these conquered, these bondsmen, these tillers of the ground; and now, when the descendants of the Franks are in a fair way to become servient to the children of the Gauls, a *pied-plat* is still a man born to serve. I forget where I read recently that there is not a single family in France which, with any foundation, can trace itself back to that northern horde who seized a country, already conquered, which could not

be guarded by its masters. But origins like this, eluding that art of arts the heraldic science, are demonstrated by the fact. The grand-nephews of the Scythians may be identified easily in the most mixed assembly, and all the *pieds-plats* will still recognise their natural lords. I do not recall the more or less high-born outline of your own foot, but I warn you that mine must be classed among the conquerors, and it is for you to decide whether you may continue to maintain a familiar manner of addressing me.

LETTER XXIX

PARIS, *March* 2 (III).

I feel nothing in common with a country where the destitute man is compelled to ask alms in the name of Heaven. Oh what a people is that to whom the man as man is nothing!

When some unfortunate says to me: "May the Holy Virgin reward you! . . . When he gives voice after this fashion to his pitiful gratitude, I do not take credit to myself with inward pride because I am emancipated from fond or ridiculous chains, or again from those opposite prejudices which no less lead the world. Rather my head inclines unconsciously, my eyes fall to the ground, I am afflicted and humbled at finding the mind of man at once so vast and so obtuse.

In the case of a broken-down creature who begs the whole day, uttering the wail of long sorrows in the middle of some populous town, I confess to indignation, and could well lay hands on those people who go out of their way to avoid him, who see him and heed him not. It makes me angry to find myself amidst this horde of dull tyrants. I

can picture a just and manly pleasure in watching avenging flames annihilate such towns and all the work of their hands, those arts fantastic, those idle books, those factories, workshops and dockyards. Do I know all the same what should or what can be done? I wish for nothing.

I consider actualities; I relapse into doubt; I see nothing but a dense darkness. I will renounce the very notion of a better world! Tired and rebuffed, I lament only a profitless existence and fortuitous wants. Ignorant of my whereabouts, I await that day which puts a period to all and enlightens nothing.

By the door of a play-house, at the entrance to the first-class seats, is an ill-starred wretch who has found no one to give him alms. They have nothing, as they say, to bestow, and the gatekeeper who looks after the quality rebuffs him rudely. He betakes himself to the pit ticket-office, where another gatekeeper, charged with a less august mission, pretends not to see him. I follow him with my eyes. At length comes a man like a shop-assistant, with his money ready in his hand for the purchase of his ticket; he refuses the mendicant gently, then hesitates, feels in his pocket but finds nothing, finishes by giving him the silver coin, and makes off. The beggar is conscious of the sacrifice, watches him depart, and takes a few steps with what speed he can muster, as if evidently prompted to follow him.

LETTER XXX

PARIS, *March* 7 (III).

It was cloudy and somewhat cold; I was in a dejected frame of mind, and wandered on through incapacity for doing anything else. I passed a few flowers growing on a wall over which I could just lean, and among them there

was a jonquil in bloom. It is the strongest expression of desire, the year's first fragrance. I apprehended all the happiness destined for man. That unspeakable harmony of existences, the phantom of the ideal world, was present in its fulness within me. Never had I experienced anything more grand or so instantaneous. I was baffled in discovering what form, what analogy, what secret correspondence caused me to discern in this flower an illimitable beauty, the expression, the elegance, the mien of a happy and unsophisticated woman in all the grace and splendour of the season of love. Never shall I grasp that power; that vastness which eludes all expression; that form which nothing can contain; that conception of a better world, which is felt by us and Nature has not made; that heavenly ray, which we think to seize, which we long for, which wraps us away, and is yet only an indiscernible, wandering phantom, lost in the abyss of darkness.

But this shadow, this image beautified in the vagueness, strong with all the fascination of the unknown, become indispensable amidst our miseries, grown native to our overcharged hearts—what man is there who, once privileged to behold it, can forget it for ever?

When the resistance, the inertia of a dead, rude, depraved power, ensnares, enwinds, oppresses and plunges us in uncertainties, disgust, frivolities and cruel or senseless excesses; when we know and possess nothing; when all things marshal before us like the grotesque images of an odious or absurd dream, who shall repress in our hearts the need of another order and another nature?

And must this light be nothing but a fantastic gleam? It allures, it persuades in the universal night. It enthralls us and we pursue it; if it misdirects, at least it enlightens and enkindles us. We picture in our hearts and seem indeed to behold on earth a land of peace, of order, of unison, of

justice, where Nature's finer feelings reign in all, where all desire and enjoy with the delicacy which originates, and the simplicity which multiplies pleasures. When we have thus conceived unalterable and permanent delights, when we have imaged all the fruitiness of true pleasure, how vain and miserable are the cares, the yearnings, the delights of the visible world! All is cold, all empty; we vegetate in a place of exile, and from the depth of our loathing we fix hearts overcharged with weariness on our imagined fatherland. All which engrosses them here, all which impedes, is henceforward as an enslaving chain; we should smile in our pity if we were not overwhelmed in our sorrow. And when imagination wings its flight once more towards those higher spheres, and compares a reasonable world with this wherein all fatigues and all wearies, we can no longer feel assured whether the sublime conception is only a blissful dream which leads us astray from realities, or whether social life is not itself one long aberration.

LETTER XXXI

PARIS, *March* 30 (III).

My concern about trifles is great; in such matters I give heed to my interests. I neglect no details in those microscopical nothings which would raise a smile of pity among reasonable men; if things that are serious seem small to me, the small things assume value in my eyes. I must endeavour to account for these eccentricities, and ascertain whether I am narrow and petty by disposition. Were there any question of things that are truly important, were the welfare of a nation in my charge, I feel that I should exhibit an energy in proportion to my destiny, under such a splendid and arduous burden. But I am

ashamed of the interests of civil life; all these solicitudes of mankind are the anxieties of children in my eyes. Many weighty concerns seem to me only miserable perplexities, in which people entangle themselves with more levity than energy, and in which man would scarcely seek his greatness if he were not enfeebled and perturbed by a fallacious idea of perfection.

I assure you in all simplicity that it is not through my fault if I look at things in this manner, nor am I imbued with any hollow pretension; I have frequently desired to see otherwise, but have never been able. What shall I say to you? more miserable than others are, I suffer among them, because of their frailty, and in a stronger nature I should suffer still, because they have brought me to their own weakness.

Could you only conceive how I busy myself over the nothings which are thrown aside at twelve years old, how I am charmed by those circular pieces of hard and well-scoured wood, which serve for plates in the mountains; how I hoard old periodicals, not for reading purposes, but because soft paper is useful for wrapping things up; how at sight of a well-planed board I utter a cry of admiration, whilst a gem that is engraved beautifully is scarcely curious in my eyes, and the sight of a string of diamonds prompts almost a gesture of contempt.

I have eyes only for the use which lies close at hand; analogies which are of the indirect order I find it a task to master; I would lose ten louis with less regret than a serviceable knife which I have been carrying for a considerable time.

You said to me, already long ago: "Do not neglect your affairs, do not lose what still remains to you; you have no talent for acquisition." To-day I do not think that your opinion will have altered.

Am I then restricted only to the petty interests? Shall

I refer my singularities to the taste for simple things, to the result of ingrained weariness, or are they rather a childish aberration, a sign of incapacity as regards what is social, virile and generous? When I observe so many overgrown children, withered by age and their interests, babbling of serious pursuits; when I turn a disillusionised glance on my own restricted life; when I consider how much is demanded by the human species and nothing of it all accomplished; my brow contracts, my eyes grow fixed, and an involuntary groan trembles on my lips. My glance also is abased, and I am as a man weary with his vigils. A person of some consideration once remarked to me: "You do a great deal of work then!" Happily I did not laugh. Only the laborious air was wanting to complete my shame.

All those men who are nothing in the last analysis, though it is necessary nevertheless to meet them from time to time, indemnify me slightly for the weariness which their cities inspire. The more rational I like well enough, for they at least amuse me.

LETTER XXXII

PARIS, *April* 29 (III).

Some time ago in the library I heard the celebrated L—— mentioned in my vicinity, and later on I chanced to be with him at the same table. There was no ink available, so I passed him my own inkstand. This morning, observing his entrance, I took a seat near him, and he was good enough to show me some idylls which he had chanced on in an old Latin manuscript. They were, however, by a Greek author, and one who is very little known. I transcribed the shortest only, as it was nearly closing-time.

LETTER XXXIII

PARIS, *May* 7 (III).

Unless I am mistaken, my idylls do not interest you strongly: so the author I have mentioned observed to me yesterday. He was on the watch for my arrival, and beckoned as I entered the library. While I was casting about for an answer which would be at once courteous and truthful, he saved me further trouble by adding, with a glance in my direction: Possibly you will prefer a moral or philosophical fragment which has been attributed to Aristippus, is mentioned by Varro, and has been regarded hitherto as lost. It is not all the same, for in the fifteenth century it was rendered into French of the period. I have found it in manuscript bound up with a copy of Plutarch, printed by Amyot, which has never been consulted because a number of leaves are wanting.

I confessed that, being nothing of a scholar, I had, as a matter of fact, the bad taste to prefer things to words, and was therefore more curious about the views of Aristippus than about an eclogue, even supposing it to be the work of Bion or Theocritus.

There is insufficient evidence, as it seems to me, that this little dissertation is from the pen of Aristippus, and it is due to his memory to be cautious in attributing to him something which he would perhaps have disclaimed. But if it be his work, the illustrious Greek who, no less misjudged than Epicurus, is regarded as voluptuous to the point of effeminacy, or at least as too indulgent in his teachings, was endowed with the severity, nevertheless, which is exacted by prudence and order, the one severity which becomes man born to enjoy the world and pass rapidly through it.

I have changed as I could into modern French this exploded though occasionally felicitous version, which in more than one place I found not a little hard to understand. Here now is the whole fragment, termed "Manual of Pseusophanes" in the manuscript, some two lines excepted, which have defied my skill in deciphering.

MANUAL

You have awakened but a moment ago, melancholy, dejected, weary beforehand of the hours which unfold before you. You have turned a glance of disgust on life; you have found it hollow, yet burdensome. But it will appear more endurable within the space of one hour. Will it have changed, however?

It is void of determinate form. All that man experiences is in his heart, all that he knows is in his thought; all these are wholly within himself.

What losses can thus overwhelm you? What indeed can you lose? Is anything extrinsic to yourself which belongs to you? What matters that which can perish? Everything passes away, save only that justice which underlies the vesture of the transitory. All is vanity for man if he do not advance with equable and tranquil pace in harmony with the laws of his intelligence.

All is disquietude and all menace about you; if you give way to apprehension, your anxieties will never end. You will be no nearer the attainment of that which is incapable of attainment, and you will lose the life which is yours. Whatsoever comes must also pass away, and for ever. These things are necessary accidents engendered in an eternal circle; they are effaced like a sudden and fugitive shadow.

What evils afflict you? Imaginary apprehensions, fanciful

needs, the crosses of a single day. O pusillanimous slave! You are clinging to the non-existent, you are seeking help from phantoms. Abandon that which is illusory, vain and perishable to the deluded throng. Consider only the understanding which is the principle of the world's order, and man who is the instrument thereof; the understanding which must be conformed to, and man who needs our succour.

The understanding strives against the resistance of matter, and against those blind laws functioning under the name of chance. When the strength which indues you has been pressed into the pursuit of understanding, when you have served the order of the world, what more would you have? You have acted in conformity with your nature, and what is better for any being who feels and knows than to abide in such harmony?

Reborn each day into a new life, put to heart afresh your determination that you will not pass through this world to no purpose. The world hurries on towards its end, but, in your case, you pause, you go back, you subsist in a condition of deprivation and of languishment. Say, will your squandered days be renewed in a more fortunate time? Life consists exclusively of this very present which you immolate in your contempt to the future, for the present is time and the future is merely its shadow.

Live in yourself and seek that only which does not perish. Examine all those things for which our unthinking appetites hanker: of all their multitude is there one which suffices to man? Only in itself does understanding find the food of its life: be just and strong. None knoweth of the day which cometh after; you will find no peace in things which are external, seek after it in your heart within. Force is the law of Nature; power is will; energy amidst sufferings is

better than apathy amidst pleasures. He who obeys and endures is often greater than he who enjoys or commands. That which you fear is vain, and vain also is that which you desire. Your welfare follows only in conformity to the will of Nature.

You are at once intelligence and matter. The world itself is not otherwise. Bodies are modified by harmony, and all tends to perfection by the continuous amelioration of all its parts. This law of the universe is that also of individuals.

. . . . . .

Hence all is good when it is ruled by understanding, and all is bad when understanding forsakes it. Avail yourself of bodily comforts, yet with the prudence which subjugates them to order. A pleasure that is possessed in harmony with universal Nature is better than a privation which she does not enjoin, and the most mediocre action of our life is less mischievous than the strain of those purposeless virtues which impede wisdom.

There is no other ethic for us than that of the heart of man, no other science or wisdom than the knowledge of its requirements, and the just estimation of the means of happiness. Leave useless knowledge, supernatural systems and mysterious doctrines. Surrender to higher or differently constituted intelligences those things which are remote from you, for that which your understanding cannot discern clearly is that which was not intended for it.

Console, enlighten and sustain your kind; the place which you fill in the immensity of life sets forth your mission. Know and follow after the laws of man, and you will assist others to know and to follow them. Contemplate and show forth to them the centre and end of things; let them recognise the reason of all that excites their wonder, the instability of all which troubles them, the nothingness of the things which allure them.

Do not isolate yourself from the whole of the world, ever keep your eyes on the universe, and remember justice. You will then have fulfilled your life, you will have performed the part of a man.

LETTER XXXIV

Extract from Two Letters

PARIS, *2nd and 4th of June* (III).

First-rate actors sometimes visit Marseilles, Bordeaux and Lyons, yet the theatre is at its best only in Paris. A combination of several conditions is exacted by tragedy and true comedy, and it is difficult for that combination to be found elsewhere. The performance of masterpieces is rendered indifferent or even ridiculous if they are not played with a skill which approaches perfection; they fail to interest the man of taste when he cannot applaud a dignified and faithful interpretation of natural expression. For plays of the second-rate comic order it may be enough that the actor-in-chief should be gifted with real talent. Burlesque does not demand the same unison, the same harmony; it suffers rather from discords, because it is itself founded on the delicate sentiment of certain discordances; but faults which raise a laugh in the pit are intolerable in a heroic piece.

Some theatre-goers are constituted so happily that they do not need great verisimilitude; they never fail in believing themselves face to face with reality, and, whatever the acting, they are compelled to shed tears as soon as there is one sigh or a single dagger. But those who are not addicted to weeping will scarcely frequent the theatre to hear what they can read at home; they go there to study a personation, and to compare the acting of one with that of another in the same episode.

At intervals of a few days I have seen the difficult part of Mahomet played by the three actors who are alone capable of attempting it. La R., in an out-of-character costume, declaiming his speeches with excessive animation and deficient solemnity, unduly dwelling on the final line, pleased me only in three or four passages, wherein I recognised the great tragedian who is admired in parts that are better suited to him.

S. P. does well in this character, which he has studied successfully and interprets very well, but he is always the actor and never Mahomet.

B., to my mind, was the only one who interpreted truly this extraordinary part. His manner, itself striking, seemed actually that of an oriental prophet, but he was, it may be, less great, less sublime, less impressive than might be expected in a victorious law-giver and an ambassador of heaven destined to compel conviction, to subjugate, to triumph, to reign. It is true that Mahomet, "weigh'd down with cares of altar and of throne," was not so haughty as Voltaire has depicted him, nor was he such an arrant impostor. But the actor in question, who by rights should be the Mahomet of the tragedy, is not even that of history. Nevertheless, he has satisfied me more fully than the two others, despite the fine physique of the second and the greater general capabilites of the first. B. alone has caught the spirit of the cursing of Palmyra. S. P. drew his sword, and I was in dread lest the audience should laugh. La R. placed his hand thereon; his glance pulverised Palmyra, and hence what purpose was served by this hand on the scimitar, this threat against a woman and especially against Palmyra, the young and the beloved? B. was not even armed, and this pleased me. When, weary of listening to Palmyra, he sought at length to check her, his profound and terrible glance seemed to com-

mand her in the name of God, compelling her to remain in suspension between the terror of her previous belief and the present despair of betrayed conscience and love.

How can it be argued seriously that method of expression is a question of convention? Here is an error identical with that of the false proverb, so frequently cited, which affirms that it is useless to dispute about tastes or colours.

What did M. R. prove by singing on the same notes: I have lost my Eurydice, I have found my Eurydice? There is no need to deny that the same notes may serve to express the greatest joy or the deepest sorrow, but is the musical sense altogether in the notes? When the word *found* is substituted for the word *lost*, when joy is set in the place of sorrow, the notes are preserved indeed, but the subsidiary means of expression are changed absolutely. It is incontestable that a foreigner who understood neither word could not be deceived as to this. Such secondary methods have also their place in music; let them say, if they will, that the note is arbitrary.

This tragedy of Mahomet exhibits Voltaire at his finest, but possibly in another nation he would not have made the conquering prophet the lover of Palmyra. It is true that the love of Mahomet is masculine, absolute, even somewhat savage; he is not a Titus in his passion, but it might have been better if he had not loved at all. The attraction of Mahomet towards women is, of course, well known, but it is probable that, in his profound and ambitious heart, after so many years of dissimulation, of concealment, of perils and triumphs, it was not the passion of love.

Such love for Palmyra was ill-assorted alike with his genius and his high destinies; love is out of place in the severe heart, engrossed by its designs, grown old in the

craving for authority, acquainted with pleasures for the purpose of forgetfulness only, and for which happiness would have been itself but a distraction.

What signifies his: Love only consoles me? Who impelled him to covet the throne of the East, to forsake his wives and his obscure independence, to take up thurible, sceptre and arms? Love only consoles me! To direct the destinies of nations, to transform cultus and laws in a whole quarter of the globe, to exalt Arabia over the ruins of the world, is this then so melancholy a life, is it an inactivity so lethargic? 'Tis a difficult task doubtless, but it is one precisely to which love is forbidden. Such necessities of the heart begin in the vacancy of the soul: he who has great things to perform has the least need of loving.

It might be different if this man who for so long has known no equal, and presides godlike over an infatuated universe; if this favourite of the lords of war, should love a woman who could co-operate with him to deceive the universe, or a woman, a Zenobia, also born to reign; if he were even loved in return; but this Mahomet who made Nature subject to his austerity, observe how he is intoxicated with his fondness for a child who casts not a thought upon him.

It is conceivable that a night with Laïs may be man's most supreme delight, but it remains that it is delight only. To be absorbed by an extraordinary woman, and by one who loves us, is more, it may be a duty even; but as a fact it is a secondary duty only.

I fail to understand those mighty ones to whom the glance of a mistress is law. I can, I think, realise what is possible to love, yet a man who governs does not belong to himself. Love plunges us into errors, illusions, imperfections, and the defects of the powerful man are too important, too fateful—in a word, they are public misfortunes.

I have a poor opinion of those men who, entrusted with great power, forget how to rule as soon as they find something else to occupy them; who set their affections before their business and believe that if all be made subservient to them it is for their mere amusement; who dispose of the needs of the nations according to the caprices of their private life, and would decapitate their whole army in order to behold their mistress. I pity those nations who are counted by their master among the last of all things that he loves, who are betrayed already if the chambermaid of a favourite finds that there is something to gain by undoing them.

LETTER XXXV

PARIS, *July* 8 (III).

I have met at last with a responsible person who will make an end of the business which has detained me here. Apart from this, it is practically finished already. There is no further remedy, and it is well known that I come forth a ruined man. I am bereft even of the means of subsistence until an event, which is possibly very remote, shall come about and work a change in my condition. I am not conscious of any disquietude, nor do I realise that I have lost much in thus losing all, seeing that I have enjoyed nothing. My misfortune, it is true, may be increased, but my happiness will not be diminished. I am alone, and have only my own needs. Assuredly, so long as I am not ill or in chains, my lot will be always bearable. Little can I fear misfortune, who am so weary of being well off to no purpose. Life of necessity has its periods of reverse; this is the hour for resistance and for courage. It is the hour too when one nourishes hope, saying: I am passing through the season of trial, I am

eating the bread of my misery; it is probable that better things will follow.—But in prosperity, when outward circumstances seem to include us in the number of the fortunate, when the heart notwithstanding enjoys nothing, we are ill-equipped for the loss of that which is not always assured us by fortune. We deplore the sadness of life at its best periods; we dread the unknown mischance which is to be anticipated from the instability of things; we fear it the more because, being wretched independently thereof, we regard its additional burden as something wholly insupportable. So those who are living on their own estates find it more endurable to be bored there in the winter, which they know already to be the season of depression, than during the summer, when they are looking forward to the pleasures of country life.

There is no course left me by which I can remedy what has occurred, and I have no idea as to what I must do until we have discussed it together. Hence I dream only of the present. In this manner I am set free from all my cares, and have never felt so tranquil. I am starting for Lyons; I look to spend ten days in your company, and that in the sweetest irresponsibility. For the rest, we shall see.

THE FIRST FRAGMENT

Fifth Year.

If happiness were measured out in proportion to our privations or advantages, there would be too much inequality among men. If it depended exclusively on char-
that inequality would be greater still. If it depended
on the combination of character and circum-
en whom their prudence and destiny unite
uld possess too many advantages. Extreme

happiness and extreme misery would divide mankind. But more than mere circumstances are required to make up our lot in life, and more even than the concurrence of actual circumstances with the trace or the habit left by circumstances of the past, or with the special tendencies of our character. Attached to the combination of these causes there are far-reaching effects; but these alone do not occasion our native obstinacy and moroseness, our discontent, our aversion towards things and persons—in a word, towards all human life. We hold within ourselves the general principle of coldness and dislike or indifference; we all possess it, independently of anything which our individual inclinations and habits can add thereto, and independently of any power which they may exert to diminish its consequences. A certain modification of our humours, a certain condition of our whole being, can produce this moral affection within us. Suffering, even as joy, is one of our necessities; we are driven to distress ourselves over external things, even as to seek for enjoyment.

Man cannot desire and possess without intermission, just as he cannot suffer always. The continuity of an order of agreeable or painful sensations cannot subsist for any length of time in the absolute privation of their opposites. The mutability of the affairs of life does not permit of such constancy in the affections which we receive therefrom, and if even it were otherwise, our organisation is not susceptible of invariability.

If the man who believes in his fortune does not foresee misfortune approaching from without, he makes haste to discover it within him, while the unfortunate to whom external consolations are wanting, finds them speedily in his own heart.

When we have planned everything, insured everything with a view to enjoy always, we have effected little towards

happiness. Something arises unfailingly to discontent and afflict us; if we have contrived to avert every evil, the good itself will displease us.

But if neither the faculty of enjoyment nor of suffering can be exercised to the absolute exclusion of that which is designed by our nature to counterpoise it, each at least can be exercised accidentally to a much greater extent than the other. Thus circumstances, without being for us the sum of all things, will exert notwithstanding a great influence over our inward habits. If men who are favoured by fortune are without great opportunities of suffering, the least things suffice to inflict it upon them; in default of any real cause, the occasion will be found everywhere. Those who are pursued by adversity, and have therefore signal opportunities for suffering, will endure bravely, but, having experienced as much as they can bear at a given time, they will not suffer habitually; when circumstances leave them to themselves they will cease to suffer, because the need to do so has been satisfied, and they will even experience enjoyment, because the opposite necessity reacts with much greater constancy in proportion as the fulfilment of the other need has carried us further in the opposed direction.

These two forces tend to equilibrium, but they do not attain it, unless indeed as regards the entire species. Were there no tendency to equilibrium there would be no order, while if equilibrium obtained in every detail, then all would be fixed and motionless. On each of these suppositions, harmony, at once one and varied, would be wanting, and the world would cease to exist.

It seems to me that the man who is excessively unfortunate, but irregularly and by fits and starts, must have a perpetual tendency towards joy, calmness, affectionate enjoyments, confidence, friendship, rectitude. The

man who is excessively unfortunate, but regularly, slowly, uniformly, will be perpetually at war with two forces and will be uncertain, difficult and irritable of disposition. Always imagining the good, and for that very reason chafing against the evil, minutely conscious of this alternative, he will be more wearied than attracted by the minor illusions, will be undeceived rapidly and will be discouraged even as he is interested by all. He who is to some extent, and constantly, part happy, part miserable, approximates to equilibrium, and in this uniformity will be a good rather than a great man; his life will be more calm than blissful, he will have sound judgment but little genius. The man who is habituated to enjoyment and is shielded from all visible misfortune, will be attracted by nothing; he is without further need of enjoyment, and in the midst of his external welfare will secretly experience a perpetual need of suffering. He will not be open-hearted, indulgent, or loving, and, indifferent to the enjoyment of the greatest blessings, will be disposed to convert the most trifling impediment into a misfortune. Unaccustomed to the experience of reverses, he will possess confidence, but in himself or in his fortune, and not in regard to others, for he will not feel the need of their support, and, as his good fortune is greater than that of the majority, he will be disposed to think himself wiser than all others. Invariably anxious for enjoyment, for the appearance of great enjoyment above all, and experiencing at the same time an inward necessity for suffering, he will find easy pretexts for vexation and for ill-will towards men. Not being truly well off, yet with nothing better to hope for, he will desire nothing positively, but will love change in general and in the details rather than the whole. Possessed of too much, he will be quick to forsake everything. He will find a certain pleasure, a species of vanity, in being vexed, alienated, suffering, dis-

contented. He will be hard to please and exacting, for, apart from this, what would remain to him of that superiority which he assumes to possess over others, and would still affect, did he no longer claim to possess it? He will be hard, he will seek to surround himself with slaves, so that others may confess to his superiority, and that they at least may suffer on account of it though he himself has no enjoyment therein.

I question whether it is good for man as he is to be habitually fortunate, never to have fate against him. It may be that the happiest among us is he who has suffered much, yet not constantly, and not in that lingering and constricting manner which crushes the faculties, but is not so acute as to excite the secret energies of the soul, and happily force it to look within itself for unknown resources.

To have been acquainted with misfortune at that age when life may be said to begin for mind and heart is an advantage which endures through all life. It is the lesson of destiny; it makes good men, extends ideas and matures hearts before they have been weakened by age; it creates the man, and that not too late for him to be complete man. It may reduce his joys and pleasures, but it imparts the sentiment of order and the taste for domestic blessings; it imparts to existence the highest felicity which we can look for, that of expecting nothing but to vegetate usefully and in peace. We are far less unfortunate when we have no further wish than to live; we are far nearer to usefulness, when, still in the strength of our prime, we seek nothing further for ourselves. I find only misfortune which thus, in advance of old age, can mature ordinary men.

True goodness requires enlarged perceptions, a great soul and the restraint of the passions. If goodness be the first merit of man, if moral perfections are essential to happiness, it is among those who have suffered much in

the first years of the life of the heart that we shall find men best organised for themselves and for the interest of all, the most just, most sensible, the least removed from happiness and the most inflexibly devoted to virtue.

What does it signify to the social order that an old man has renounced the objects of the passions, or that a weak man has no scheme for doing harm? The good kind of people are not the good men; those who do good only through weakness may be capable of much evil in another set of circumstances. Susceptible of suspicion, animosity, superstition, and above all, obstinacy, the blind instrument of many laudable things towards which he is drawn by inclination will be also the abject sport of every foolish notion which may come into his head to derange it, of the mania which will corrupt his heart, or of some fatal scheme over which a rogue will know how to employ him.

But the truly good man is invariable; he is a stranger to the passions of a clique and to all local customs; he cannot be used as a tool; he knows neither animosity, ostentation, nor excess; he is not surprised at a good action, because he would have been the first to perform it, nor at an evil, because he knows that there is evil in Nature; indignant at crime, he does not detest the criminal; despising all lowness of soul, he has yet no scorn of the worm because it is devoid of wings. He is not the enemy of the superstitious, and he is without the contrary superstitions. He seeks rather for the origin, frequently based on reason, of innumerable opinions which have become insensate, and he laughs at what has thus suffered change. He is virtuous, not, however, through fanaticism, but because he is desirous of order. He does good in order to minimise the futility of his life; he prefers the enjoyment

of others rather than his own, for enjoyment in others is possible, but scarcely in him. He would reserve to himself only the means of being good for something, and the opportunity to live without trouble; peace is necessary to him who does not look for pleasures. He is not untrusting, but he is also not easily attracted, and hence is disposed occasionally to control the readiness of his heart; to be victimised a little may amuse him, but he must not be taken for a dupe. He may have something to suffer at the hands of knaves, but he is not their sport. From time to time he permits certain men, to whom he is of service, the small pleasure of pretending in secret to protect him. He is not contented with what he does, because he feels that much more might be accomplished; he is to some extent satisfied with his intentions, without being more proud of such interior disposition than of the good shape of one of his features. Thus he will expend hours in slow progress towards the best, occasionally with an energetic though impeded step, more often with uncertainty, something of weakness, and with the smile of discouragement.

When it is needful to oppose the merit of man to other merits that are either counterfeit or useless, by which it is sought to confuse and debase all, he lays down that the first merit is the unruffled rectitude of the good man, since it is that which is the most assuredly useful; he is accused of pride and he laughs. He suffers pains, he forgives domestic wrongs. Asked why he does not accomplish greater things, he again laughs, for these are entrusted to him; he is accused by the friends of a traitor and is condemned by him whom they betray: he smiles and goes on. His own relatives assure him that it is unheard-of injustice, and again, and still more, he laughs.

THE SECOND FRAGMENT

Sixth Year.

I am by no means surprised that accuracy in ideas should be so rare in ethics. Unequipped by the experience of the centuries, the ancients, on more than one occasion, thought of placing the destiny of the heart of man in the hands of the sages. Modern political art is more astute, it has turned over the one science to the preachers, and to that assemblage denominated men of letters by the printers; but it protects in the most express manner the art of manufacturing sugar flowers, or a new design in wigs.

When the disadvantages of a certain class of persons once begin to be observed, and once their causes are discerned, it becomes plain that the most novel and most useful thing that can possibly be done is to warn them against truths which deceive them and virtues by which they are undone.

The disdain of gold is an absurdity. Unquestionably, it is criminal to prefer gold before duty, but does not reason ordain us to prefer duty before life as well as riches? And if, notwithstanding, life be, generally speaking, a blessing, may not this also be true of gold? A few independent and isolated men may do well to dispense with it, but all do not come under this category, and such vain declamations as I have cited, being false under one aspect, become exceedingly hurtful to virtue. The principles of conduct have been turned into contradictions. If virtue be only a striving after order, by what manner of pretence can people be led in its direction through so much of disorder and confusion? For me, who esteem more highly the qualities resident in man's heart rather than those of his mind, I think all the same that the

leader of a people would find readier means for the control of evil hearts than of faithless minds.

Christians and others have advocated perpetual continence as a virtue; but they have not required it of mankind at large, nor have they even counselled it except for those who aspire to perfection. However absolute and impartial must be a law which comes from heaven, it has not gone so far as this. When the love of money is forbidden to humanity, too much of moderation and justice can scarcely be brought to bear thereon. Religious or philosophical abnegation may lead many people to sincere indifference for wealth, but the desire to possess it is unavoidable in ordinary life. Equipped therewith, wherever I put in an appearance, I have only to make a sign, and that sign obtains my requirements — food, clothing, amusement, ministry to mine and me, and enjoyment for all about me. If any one suffers, let him say so, his troubles are over. I give my orders, and they are obeyed immediately.

Those who despise gold are like those who despise glory, women, ability, courage, merit. When mental imbecility, physical incapacity, or grossness of soul make it impossible to use without abusing an advantage, it is customary to calumniate that advantage, not perceiving that one's own baseness is alone accused. The man of immoral life disdains women, the dullard asperses mind, the sophist moralises against money. Undoubtedly, the weak slaves of their passions, the clever fool, the vacant counterjumper would be more wretched or vicious if they were rich; such people should possess little, because to possess and abuse is for them the same thing. There is also no doubt that he who grows wealthy and lives henceforth to the utmost as a monied man, gains nothing, and sometimes loses by the change in his circumstances. But

why is it that he is not better than before? Because he is not really richer, he is merely more opulent, and hence is additionally embarrassed and restless. He has large revenues, and so good is his management that the least occurrence deranges them, while his debts increase till he is ruined. Such a man is indisputably poor. To multiply wants an hundred-fold; to do everything out of ostentation; to keep twenty horses because another has fifteen, and to increase them to thirty forthwith if the latter should acquire five more—all this is to load one's self with the fetters of a penury more painful and more anxious than any former poverty. But to have a convenient and healthy house, clean and well appointed within, to have reasonable abundance, simple elegance and to stop at that, should our resources be even quadrupled; to employ what remains for the help of a friend in difficulties; to forestall misfortunes; to indemnify the good man in misfortune for that which he gave in his youth to those now more happy than himself; to replace for the thrifty woman the only cow which she has lost; to send corn to the farmer whose field has been ravaged by hail; to repair the bad roads which have proved a danger to traffic; to find employment in accordance with taste and ability; to impart knowledge, the spirit of order, and talents to our children—all this is of far higher worth than the privation which is so clumsily extolled by false wisdom.

The contempt of gold, so inconsiderately commended to the age which is ignorant of its value, has often deprived men with superior capacity of one of the greatest means, perhaps the surest safeguard, against the useless life of the crowd.

How many young women pride themselves, in their choice of a husband, on counting possessions as nothing, and so involve themselves in all the mortifications of a

precarious lot, and in that permanent weariness which itself contains so many evils!

A quiet and common-sense man, who despises a frivolous character, is attracted by some similarity in tastes; he surrenders to the vulgar their gaiety and laughter, even their vivacity and activity; he takes a serious and sad wife, affected by the first contradiction, soured by disappointments, who as she ages grows taciturn, brusque, imperious, austere, and peevishly disposed to do without everything, comes to do so very soon out of mere peevishness, and to teach the same self-denial to others, fills the whole house with wretchedness.

It was in no jesting mood that Epicurus observed: "The wise man chooses a light-hearted, affable friend." A philosopher of twenty unthinkingly sets aside this counsel, and it is much if he does not openly rebel at it, for he has rejected vulgar prejudices, but he realises its importance when he has rejected the prejudices of wisdom.

To be different from the common run of mankind counts for little; to differ from the common run of the wise is to have made a step towards wisdom.

LETTER XXXVI

LYONS, *April* 7 (VI).

Uplifted mountains, headlong fall of accumulated snows, lone peace of the valley in the forest, sere leaves which the silent runnel takes onward, what would ye be to man if ye spake not to him of other men? Nature would be mute did they exist no more. If I remained the last of all my race, what impression could be exercised upon me by the rumours of the austere night, the solemn silence of the

great valleys, the light of the sun setting over calm waters in a heaven suffused with melancholy? Nature is perceived only in its correspondences with humanity, and the eloquence of external things is nothing but the eloquence of man. The fruitful earth, the vast heavens, the flying waters, are but an expression of the relations which our hearts produce and contain.

Perfect conformity, intimacy of the old attachments. When the hand of a friend was recognised in the superscription of a letter by him who was boundless in his love, had he eyes left to examine at such a moment the beauty of a prospect or to compute the height of a glacier? But the relationships of human life have increased since then; the perception of such relations has become unsettled, restless, full of coldness and repellency; ever is the old friendship remote from our hearts or from our destiny. Between hope and caution, between the delights that we expect and the bitterness that we experience, bonds of union are left incomplete. Familiarity itself is frustrated by weariness, or destroyed by sharing, or arrested by circumstance. Man grows old, and his discouraged heart ages before himself. If all that he can love be in man, all that he would avoid is in man also. There where he finds so many social felicities, there, and by an inevitable necessity, he discovers all discordances. Hence, one who fears more than he hopes remains to some extent alienated from his kind. Things without life exercise a lesser sway, but they are more truly ours because they are that which we make them. They offer less than we seek, but we are more certain to find in them, when we so choose, that which they do contain, in a word, the gifts of mediocrity, limited but yet assured. Passion seeks out man, reason sometimes finds itself compelled to abandon him for things which are less excellent and less baneful.

A powerful bond is established in this manner between man and that friend of man, selected outside his own species, and yet so well assorted because he is less than we are but more than things inanimate. Were it needful for man to choose a friend at chance, it would be far better for him to take one from among the race of dogs rather than that of men. The last of his own kind would bring him fewer consolations and less peace than the least of these animals.

And when a family is in the loneliness not of the desert but of isolation; when those feeble, suffering beings who have so many means of being wretched and so few of being contented, who have moments only for enjoyment and a day only for life; when father and wife, when mother and daughters, are without affability, without any bond of union; when they decline to interest themselves in the same things; when they know not how to endure the same miseries and to hold up at equal distances the chain of misfortunes; when by self-seeking or ill-humour each of them, suspending his concurrence, lets it drag heavily over the rugged ground, tracing the long furrow in which the briers that rend them all spring up with threatening profusion, O men! what are you then for man?

When the act of kindness, the word of peace, of benevolence, of generous forgiveness, are received with disdain, with sour temper, with freezing indifference—O Universal Nature, so hast thou ruled it that virtue may manifest its greatness, and that the heart of man may become still better, and more resigned, under the weight which threatens to overwhelm it!

LETTER XXXVII

LYONS, *May* 2 (VI).

There are moments when I could despair of enduring the unrest which torments me. Then everything whirls me away, and carries me forward with irresistible force; from this height I fall back in dismay, and am lost in the abyss which it has opened.

If I were absolutely alone, moments like these would be beyond bearing, but it seems that the labour of describing to you what I feel softens the effect thereof. To whom else could I unbosom myself thus? Who else would tolerate the wearisome loquacity of a gloomy mania, of a sensibility so unprofitable? My one pleasure is to narrate all that I am unable to say except to you, all that I should not wish to unveil to another, and that no other could desire to hear. Of what consequence to me is the extent of my letters? The longer they are, and the greater the time which I spend over them, the more valuable they are to me; and, if I err not, the bulk of the packet has never yet dismayed you. We spend hours at a time in conversation, why should we not write for a couple?

It is not my intention to reproach you. You write at less length because you are more concise in your manner of expression. Besides, your occupations fatigue you, and you enjoy correspondence less, even with those whom you love. You say that you have things to tell me in private, but I who am a hermit, or at least a fantastic dreamer, have nothing in reality to say, and yet I say it at twice the length. All that runs through my head, all that I should recite in conversation, I set down if opportunity offer; but all that I think, all that I feel, I write of

necessity—it is indeed a necessity for me. When I cease to do so, conclude that I no longer feel anything, that my soul is extinct, that I have grown tranquil and reasonable, that at last I spend my days in eating, sleeping and card-playing. I should in truth be more happy!

I could wish that I followed some calling; it would exercise my muscles and soothe my brain. No mere talent could be so serviceable; and yet if I knew how to paint, I have a notion that I should be less restless. Long have I dwelt as in a stupor, and I awake with reluctance. More tranquil than my present dejection was my dejection then. Of all the fleeting and dubious moments when I believed, in my simplicity, that we were born on the earth to live here, none have left behind them such ineffaceable memories as some twenty days of forgetfulness and hope, when, about the vernal equinox, hard by the torrent, facing the rocks, betwixt the joyous hyacinth and the modest violet, I roamed imagining that it would be granted me to love.

I touched what I was never to clasp. Without bent, without hope, I might have vegetated, wearied but at peace. I was conscious dimly of human energy, but in my darksome life I supported my slumber. What baleful power has opened to me the vistas of the world, only to deprive me of the consolations of the void?

Carried away by an overflowing activity, thirsting to love all, to sustain all, to console all; at strife for ever between the longing to see an alteration in so many baneful things and the conviction that they will in no case be changed, I am left wearied with the evils of life, and indignant at the faithless allurement of pleasures, the eye always dwelling on the vast conglomeration of hatreds, iniquities, opprobrium and miseries of the distracted earth.

Such I am, and here is my twenty-seventh year. The best of the days are over, but I have not even seen them. Wretched in the age of felicity, what am I to expect for later seasons? I have passed in the void and the weariness all the happy period of confidence and of hope. Constrained and suffering in everything, with an empty and afflicted heart, I have arrived, while yet young, at the regrets of old age. Accustomed to behold under my barren steps the withering of every flower of life, I am like those dotards from whom everything has taken flight, but, even less blessed than they, I have lost all long before I have myself ended. Having still a hungry soul, I cannot repose in this silence of death.

Memory of years long gone, of things blotted out for ever, of scenes which will not be revisited, of men who have changed! Consciousness of life that is lost!

What places ever were for me that which they have been for others? What times were tolerable, and under what sky have I found the repose of the heart? I have seen the tumult of cities, and the vacuity of the rural places, and the austerity of the mountains; I have known the crassness of ignorance, and the agony of the arts; I have been familiar with unprofitable virtues and unimportant successes; I have marked how all good things are swallowed up in all things evil; I have observed men and destiny, ever unequal, deceiving themselves unceasingly, and in the unbridled strife of all passions, the execrable victor receiving as the guerdon of his triumph the heaviest fetters of those evils which he has contrived to bring about.

Were man in conformity with misfortune, I should pity him far less, and, considering the shortness of his span, I should despise for him as for myself the torment of a day. But all things good encompass him, but all his faculties constrain him to enjoy, but all cries to him: "Be happy!"

And man answers: "Let happiness be for the brute; art, science, glory, grandeur—be these mine!" His mortality, his misfortunes, his crimes themselves, are the least portions of his misery. I lament his losses—that calm, that free choice, that union, that peaceful possession. I lament a century squandered by millions of beings in anxieties and repression, amidst that which might constitute immunity, liberty, joy; and this life of bitterness on a voluptuous earth, because man has longed for imaginary blessings and exclusive advantages.

All this notwithstanding is little; half a century ago it was to me as nothing; half a century to come, and for me it will again be nothing.

I remarked once on a day: If the restoration of a circumscribed and isolated country to primordial manners be outside the scope of my destiny, if I must compel myself to forget the world, and must think that I am reasonably fortunate if I obtain tolerable days for myself upon this bewrayed earth, then I seek only one blessing, one shadow in this dream whence I never wish to awake. There remains upon earth, such as it now is, one illusion which still can deceive me; it is only one: I must be wise enough to permit it to delude me, the rest is not worth the pains.—That is what I then said, but chance alone could bestow on me such an inestimable error. Chance is dilatory and uncertain, but life rapid and irrevocable; its spring passes, and this cheated necessity, by wasting my life, must at length alienate my heart and transform my nature. At times already I am conscious of growing sour, I am irritated, my affections are becoming narrow; impatience may yet make me fierce of will, and a species of contempt bears me onward towards grand but austere designs. Nevertheless, bitterness of this kind does not continue by any means invariably in full force: I let myself go in the

end, as if I felt that men so languid, that things so doubtful and that my life so short deserved not the disquietude of a day, and that a full awakening is useless when one must so soon fall asleep for ever.

LETTER XXXVIII

LYONS, *May* 8 (VI).

I have journeyed as far as Blammont to call on the surgeon who was so skilful in setting a certain officer's arm when he fell from his horse on his return from Chessel.

On the occasion in question, more than twelve years ago, you will not have forgotten how, as we entered his house, he ran out into the garden to gather his choicest apricots, and how on returning with hands full, the old man, then already infirm, caught his foot against the doorstep, and so upset nearly the whole of the fruit. You will remember also how rudely his daughter cried to him: "That is just what you do every day; you will interfere with everything, and it is only to spoil everything. Can't you sit still in your chair? Here is a pretty state of things!" Our hearts bled, for he was in pain and made no answer. Poor fellow! To-day he is even more unfortunate. He is stretched by paralysis on a veritable bed of sorrows, with no one near him except this wretched creature, his daughter. It is several months since he lost the power of speech, but his right arm is not affected as yet, and he can use it to make signs. He made one which, to my sorrow, it was not possible for me to explain; he was anxious that his daughter should offer me some refreshment, but, as often happens, she did not understand him. When at length he recalled her to some other

business, I took the opportunity to make her unhappy father comprehend that there was one at least who sympathised with his misfortunes. His hearing is still very fair, and he gave me to understand in return that his daughter, believing his end close at hand, denied him everything that could diminish by a few pence the considerable heritage which he leaves her, but, though his afflictions were many, that he forgave her all, so that in his last moments he might still cherish an affection for the one being who remained to his love. Thus does an aged man behold his life flicker out! Amidst such bitterness does a father end his days in his own house! And our laws are powerless!

Such an abyss of wretchedness affects necessarily the sentiment of immortality. Were it possible that, after reaching the age of reason, I had been seriously wanting towards my father, I should be unhappy through all my life, because he is no more, and hence my fault would be no less irreparable than monstrous. It might certainly be argued that he who feels no longer, who exists no more, is chimerical, so to speak, and in a certain sense of no account, as are all things wholly passed away. I could scarcely deny it, and yet I should be inconsolable notwithstanding. It is difficult to ascertain the ground of this sentiment. Were it nothing but the consciousness of a degrading lapse, whence we have lost the opportunity of rising with a dignity which might inwardly console us, we should find at least a certain compensation in the sincerity of the intention. Where our own self-esteem is exclusively concerned, the desire of a praiseworthy action must stand for us in place of its execution; the latter differs from the desire only by its consequences, and there can be none for an ill-used person who lives no longer. The sentiment of that injustice which in its effects subsists no more, can still, we find, overwhelm us, still debase us, still lacerate us, as

though it had eternal results. One would say that the person we have aggrieved is merely absent, and that we are destined to re-establish the ties between us, but in some state which will suffer no further change in anything, no reparation of anything, and wherein the wrong will be perpetuated in spite of our remorse.

Ever does the human mind lose itself in speculating upon this connection between things effectuated and their unknown issues. It might be imagined that these conceptions of a future order and an unlimited perpetuation of present things have no other bases than the possibility of supposing them; that they must be counted amongst the instruments by which man is preserved in diversity, in contrariety, in permanent incertitude, plunged therein by his imperfect discernment of the qualities and interconnection of things.

Since my letter has not been sealed, I must quote Montaigne. I have just chanced on a passage so analogous to the idea which occupied me that I have been impressed and convinced thereby. In such comformity of thoughts there is a principle of secret joy; it is this which renders man indispensable to man, fertilising our ideas, giving assurance to our imagination, and confirming us in the opinion of what we are.

We do not find what we seek in Montaigne, we come across what is there. He must be opened by accident, and to mention this is to pay a certain homage to his manner, which is full of independence, without being burlesque or artificial, and I am not surprised that some Englishman has set the Essays above everything. Montaigne has been reproached for two things which make him worthy in reality of admiration, and for which I should never have occasion to exonerate him as between you and me.

He says in the eighth chapter of his second book: "As I know, by an abundant experience, there is no consolation so sweet amidst the loss of our friends as that which is afforded us by the knowledge that we have left nothing unsaid to them, and that a perfect and undivided confidence has subsisted between us."

Such plenary communion with a responsible being similar to ourselves and placed near us in a revered connection, seems an essential part of the mission which is bestowed on us for the employment of our allotted span. We are discontented with ourselves when at the end of the act we have lost beyond recall the merit of the execution in the episode entrusted to ourselves.

This, you will possibly tell me, is evidence that we are conscious in advance of another existence. I grant you, but we shall also acknowledge that the dog who will no longer bear the burden of life because life has ceased for his master, and hence leaps on the pyre where the body of the latter is being consumed, is eager to die with him, because he is convinced of immortality and possesses the consoling assurance of rejoining him in another world.

I have no wish to laugh at anything which it is sought to set up in place of despair, but I should jest if this restraint were removed. The confidence with which man cherishes the opinions which please him, though in directions where there is nothing to be discerned, compels respect in so far as it may diminish the bitterness of his woes; yet there is something humorous in this religious inviolability with which he pretends to surround it. If any one argued that a person might cut the throat of his father without committing a crime, we should not term it sacrilege, but should incarcerate him in a madhouse without any sense of indignation; yet we become furious if one dare to tell us that we may perhaps perish like an oak or a fox

so afraid are we of believing it. Can we fail to see that we are demonstrating our own incertitude? Our faith is as false as that of those devotees who would raise a cry of impiety if any one questioned that the eating of a chicken on Friday could plunge the soul into hell, and yet eat it in secret, such is the proportion between the dread of eternal torment and the pleasure of a few mouthfuls of meat in anticipation of Sunday.

Why not give over to each individual free fancy the things at which it can laugh, and even the hopes that all cannot entertain equally? Morality would be substantially the gainer by abandoning the support of an ephemeral fanaticism in favour of dignified dependence upon indisputable evidence. If we would have principles which appeal to the heart, let us recall those which are in the heart of every well-organised man. Let us say: "In a world of mingled pleasures and sadness the vocation of man is to increase the consciousness of joy, to stimulate overflowing energy, and to combat, in all which feels, the principle of degradation and of sorrows."

THE THIRD FRAGMENT

ON ROMANTIC EXPRESSION AND THE "RANZ DES VACHES"

Ardent and florid imaginations are captivated by the romanesque; the romantic suffices alone to profound souls and veritable sensibility. Nature is full of romantic effects in simple places, but they are destroyed by long culture in old countries, above all on the plains, which are made subject so easily and completely to the will of man.

Such romantic effects are the tones of a language which

is not intelligible to all, and is indeed quite foreign in many countries. We cease very soon to understand them when we no longer live in their midst, and yet this romantic harmony is the one thing only which preserves to our hearts the hues of youth and the freshness of life. The society man, conscious no longer of effects which are too remote from his ways, ends by saying: "What do they matter to me?" His state is similar to that of some constitutions which are worn out by the desiccating fire of a slow and constant poison; he discovers himself to be old already in the prime of his life, with the springs of his being relaxed, though he preserves the outward semblance of a man.

But all you, who are identified with him in the minds of the vulgar, merely because you live in simplicity and are possessed of genius, though you do not lay claim to wit;—or it may be even because they observe that you live, and, like him, are accustomed to eat and sleep—you, primitive men, scattered here and there in this vain age, to preserve the traces of natural things, you recognise and understand one another in a language which is utterly unknown to the crowd, when the October sun rises clothed in mists over the yellowing woods; when a tiny streamlet flows and falls at moonset in a meadow, ringed by trees; when, under the summer sky, on a cloudless day, there sounds at a little distance the voice of a woman, in the early morning, amidst the walls and roofs of a great city.

Picture a white and limpid surface of water, vast and yet circumscribed, its oblong and slightly curved shape stretching towards the winter sunset. Elevated peaks, majestic mountain-chains, enclose it on three sides. You are seated on the slope of the mountain, above the northern margin of the water, whereon the waves wash and from which they recede incessantly. There are sheer rocks behind you, rising

into the cloud-regions. No piercing polar wind breathes ever on this happy shore. The mountains open on your left, a quiet valley stretching between their depths; a torrent descends from the snowy summits which encompass it; and when the morning sun seems to take up its place between those frozen peaks, above the region of the mists; when mountain-voices indicate the places of the châlets, high over meadows which are still steeped in darkness; it is the awakening of a primeval land, it is a monument of our misconstrued destinies!

Here now are the first nocturnal moments—time of rest and of sublime sadness. The valley is vaporous; it is beginning to darken. It is night already on the southern side of the lake; the rocks which shut it in form a black belt under the frozen dome which crowns them, but the ice of that dome seems still to retain the daylight. The last gleams gild the chestnuts which flourish in abundance among the wild rocks; they glance in long shafts under the high branches of the Alpine fir; they burnish the mountain-sides; they kindle the snows; they inflame the air, and the waveless water, all brilliant with the light and merging into the sky, becomes infinite like that itself, and purer still, more ethereal, more beautiful. Its peace amazes, its limpidity deceives, the aerial splendour which it images seems to penetrate its depths, and beneath those mountains, cut off as it would seem from the globe, and hanging in the atmosphere, you discover at your feet the void of heaven and all the vastness of the world. It is a time of enchantment and nepenthe. The place of the sky and of the mountains, that which itself bears us up—all these are lost to us; the level and the horizon, these are also lost; a change comes over the conceptions of the mind, unknown sensations are experienced; you have come forth out of common life. And when the darkness

has enwrapped that valley of the waters, when objects and distances are discerned no longer, when the waves are stirred up by the evening wind, then the western end of the lake remains alone illumined by a pallid gleam; but all which the mountains encompass is only an indistinguishable gulf, and in the midst of the darkness and the silence, a thousand feet beneath you, there is heard the continuous insistence of the waves, passing, yet never ceasing, vibrating at equal intervals upon the margin, rushing in among the rocks, breaking upon the bank, and seeming to resound with prolonged murmurs in the invisible abyss.

It is in sounds that Nature has instilled her strongest expression of the romantic character; it is more than all in the sense of hearing that extraordinary places and things are made palpable by a few touches and in a forcible manner. Scents give rise to perceptions which are swift and immense, yet vague; those of sight seem to concern the mind rather than the heart; we admire what is seen, but we feel rather what is heard. The voice of a beloved woman is still more beautiful than her features; the sounds which are peculiar to sublime places cause deeper and more lasting impressions than their forms. I do not know any picture of the Alps which realises them so vividly as a truly Alpine melody.

That which is so celebrated under the name of the *Ranz des vaches* does not simply excite memories; it may rather be said to paint. Rousseau asserts the opposite, but I think him mistaken. Here is no imaginary effect; I know of two people who, turning over independently the engravings of the *Tableaux pittoresque de la Suisse*, both exclaimed at the sight of Grimsel: "That is the place in which to hear the *Ranz des vaches!*" When rendered with justice rather than with skill, when felt truly by him who is playing it, the first strains transport us to the high valleys,

hard by naked rocks of reddish grey, under the cold sky and the burning sun. We are on the brow of rounded summits covered with pastures; the slow movements, the scenic grandeur enthral us; we see the peaceable progress of cows, and the measured swaying of their great bells, close against the clouds, on the gently sloping expanse between the crest of the immovable granite rocks and the granite detritus of the snowy ravines. The wind moans austerely among larches far away; there may be heard the roll of the torrent, hidden in the precipices which it has hollowed through centuries. To these isolated sounds succeed the accents of the cowherds, at once rapid and heavy, the nomadic utterance of a pleasure which is removed from gaiety, of a mountain joy. The songs cease, the man loiters away; the bells have passed the larches; nothing is now audible but the clatter of falling pebbles and the fitful crash of trees which the torrent carries down to the valleys. The wind takes far or near these Alpine noises, and when it drowns them, all seems cold, motionless and dead. The domain of man is alone devoid of ardour. He issues from beneath his low and ample roof, shielded from the storms by heavy stones; whether the sun is burning, the wind strong, or the thunder rolling at his feet, he does not know. He takes the direction where he expects to find the cows. They are there. He calls them; they muster and approach successively. He returns at the same slow pace, laden with milk intended for plains that are unknown to him. The cows pause and graze; there is no longer any visible movement, there are no longer men. The air is cold, the wind has died with the light of evening, there remains only the glow of the age-long snows and the fall of the waters which, with their savage roaring, seem to deepen the unchanging silence of the high peaks and the glaciers and the night.

LETTER XXXIX

LYONS, *May* 11 (VI).

Whatever species of attraction exists in the legion of correspondences which bind each individual to his species and to the universe, in the comprehensive appeal that is made to the youthful heart by a whole creation open to his experiment, by this unknown and fantastic external world —all such charm is pallid, evanescent, already vanished. Offered to the activity of my own being, this earthly scene has become barren and nude; I searched for the life of the soul therein, but it held it not.

Beneath the moist drapery and vaporous enchantment of morning, I have seen the valley gradually illuminated amidst its shadows. How beautiful it was! I have seen it change and fade; the consuming day-star passed over it, inflaming and outwearying it with its glare, leaving it parched, aged and painful in its sterility. Thus is lifted lightly and thus dissipated the pleasant veil of our days. There are no longer those half-lights, those secret spaces which it is so delightful to explore. There are no more dubious transparencies whereon the eye can rest. All is arid and exhausting as the sand which flames beneath the sky of the Sahara; bereft of this vestment, all objects of life offer, with repellent realism, the exact and mournful mechanism of their naked skeleton. With continual, inevitable, irresistible motions, they hurry me away without interesting me, and disturb without assisting me to live.

Here are so many years during which evil threatens, impends, gathers and settles. If misfortune at least should not come to break the unvaried weariness, all this must needs finish.

LETTER XL

LYONS, *May* 14 (VI).

I was in the valley of the Saone, behind that long wall where we wandered of old together, speaking of Tinian as we came out of childhood, when we aspired after happiness, when we thought to live. Again I contemplated that river flowing past as in those former days; that sky of autumn, as tranquil, as beautiful as in those times of which nothing remains. A carriage was approaching; I drew aside unconsciously and continued walking, my eyes fixed upon the dry leaves which the wind hurried over the dry grass and amidst the dust of the road. The carriage stopped, and I recognised Madame D. therein, accompanied by her daughter of six years old. I took a seat in the vehicle and accompanied her to her country house, which, however, I refused to enter. You are aware that Madame D. is not yet twenty-five years of age, but that she is greatly changed notwithstanding; she speaks, however, with the same simple and perfect grace, and her eyes, if they are more sorrowful, are not less beautiful in their expression. We said nothing of her husband; you will remember that he is her senior by thirty years, and belongs to that class of financier who is deeply versed in money-matters, but a cipher in everything else. Unfortunate woman! Here is indeed a life lost; and yet fortune seemed to promise her such happiness! Was she wanting in anything which deserves felicity, or should constitute the felicity of another? What vivacity, what soul were hers! What purity of intention! And yet all these are useless. It is nearly five years since I saw her. I returned in her carriage to the town, but alighted near the spot where we had met, and remained there till a late hour.

As I was about to re-enter the house, an old and feeble man, who seemed to be overwhelmed by wretchedness, approached and looked at me attentively; he spoke to me by name, and entreated my assistance. I failed to recognise him for the moment, but was overcome when I found that he was that identical third-form professor who was so painstaking and so kind. I made some inquiries this morning, but know not whether I shall succeed in tracing him to the miserable garret where he is doubtless ending his days. The poor fellow will have thought me unwilling to acknowledge him. If I find him, he must have a decent room, and some books to restore him to his old ways. So placed, I think, he will do very well. I know not what I may promise him on your part; bear in mind that here is no question of temporary help, but of all his remaining life. I shall do nothing till I receive your instructions.

I verily believe that I had spent over an hour deciding in which direction I should take a short walk. Though the place in question is further from my abode, I seem to have been drawn thither, apparently by the need of some sadness in harmony with that which already possessed me.

I should have declared without hesitation that we were destined to meet no more. Indeed the firm resolution had been taken, and yet. . . . Though obscured by discouragement, by time and even by the diminution of my own confidence in affections too delusive or fruitless, her image is intimately connected with the sentiment of my existence and my duration in the midst of external things. I beheld her within me, but rather as the imperishable memory of a vanished dream, as those conceptions of happiness the impression of which is cherished, though they are for an age like mine no longer.

For at length I am a grown man, whom distastes have matured, and thanks to my destiny I have no other master

than the modicum of reason which we receive, one knows not why, from above. I am by no means under the yoke of the passions; desire does not lead me astray, pleasure is unlikely to corrupt me. I have renounced all these futilities of strong souls; I shall not be so absurd as to enjoy those romantic affairs on which a revulsion follows, or to be the dupe of a fine sentiment. I feel competent to behold with indifference a delightful prospect, a lovely sky, a virtuous action, a pathetic scene; and did I think it worth while, like a man of the best taste, I could cover a yawn with smiles, divert myself though consumed by chagrins, and expire of weariness with complete self-possession and signal dignity.

During the first moment I felt astonished at meeting her, and now I am again astonished because I do not see where it can lead. Is there any reason, however, why it should lead anywhere? How many occurrences are there in the course of the world which are either isolated or without known results? I make little progress in eliminating the particular instinct which seeks an outcome and consequence for all things, and for those especially which a chance brings about. I am invariably anxious to find in them both the effect of a design and an instrument of some necessity. There is some amusement in this curious tendency; it has afforded us more than one opportunity for a laugh in common, nor does it come inconveniently at the present moment.

Had I known of this meeting, it is certain that I should not have been discovered in that direction. I think, nevertheless, that I should have been wrong. A dreamer should see all, and a dreamer has unfortunately nothing of importance to fear. Is it necessary, furthermore, to avoid everything which connects with the life of the soul and whatsoever makes known its losses? Would it indeed be possible? A

perfume, a sound, a ray of light will reveal to me in the same manner that there are other things in human nature than digestion and slumber. A motion of delight in the heart of one who is unfortunate, the deep breathing of another in enjoyment, each alike will admonish me of that mysterious combination, that infinite sequence, which intelligence nourishes and unceasingly transmutes, of which bodies are the materials only, set up by the eternal idea as the types of some invisible thing which it casts like dice or computes like numbers.

Again upon the banks of the Saone I said to myself: The eye is past understanding! Not only does it, so to speak, receive the infinite, but seems even to reproduce it. It beholds the entire world, while that which it reflects, which it pictures, which it expresses is vaster still. A grace which draws all along with it, a sweet and penetrating eloquence, an expression more comprehensive than are the things expressed, the harmony which constitutes the universal bond—all these are in the eye of a woman. These and still more are in the boundless voice of her who feels. In speaking she creates new forms and new perceptions; she awakes the soul from its lethargy; she conducts and assumes it through the whole domain of moral life. When she sings it would seem that outward things become moved and plastic, that she forms them and in like manner creates new perceptions. Natural life is no longer ordinary life; all is romantic, animated, inebriating. There, seated in repose or engaged on some other affair, she transports us and we are plunged with herself in the immense world; our life is enlarged by this sublime and stately motion. At such times how frigid appear those men who are agitated by so many trifles! In what nothingness they retain us, and how wearisome it is to dwell among such tumultuous yet speechless beings!

But when all strivings, all aptitudes, all triumphs and all the gifts of accident have united for the shaping of a superb countenance, an unblemished body, a consummate manner, a noble soul, a sensitive heart, a capacious mind, one day is sufficient for weariness and discouragement to commence the annihilation of all in the void of a cloister, in the horror of a designing marriage, in the nullity of a fastidious life.

I propose to continue seeing her; she no longer expects anything; we shall do well together. She will not be surprised to find that I am devoured by weariness, and I have no fear of adding anything to her own. Our situation is defined, and so absolutely that I shall not modify my own by visiting her when she has quitted the country.

I picture already with what pleasant but jaded grace she receives the society which tries her, and with what impatience she looks forward to the morrow of days devoted to pleasure.

Daily, with scarce an exception, I discern for her the same round of weariness. Concerts and soirees, all these pastimes, are the toil of the so-called happy ones; it devolves upon them, even as the care of the vine upon the daily labourer, and it is heavier upon them than upon him, for their toil does not carry its consolation, because it produces nothing.

LETTER XLI

LYONS, *May* 18 (VI).

Fortune strives, one would say, to replace those chains on man which he has cast off in spite of fortune. What has it profited me to leave everything in search of a freer life? If I have seen external things so far as

my nature permits me, it has been only in passing, without enjoying them, and as if to multiply within me the impatience to possess them.

The slave of sense I have in nowise been, and I am the more unfortunate. Its vanity cannot deceive me, but after all, is not something required to fill life? Can existence satisfy when it is empty? If the life of the heart be only a turbulent void, is it not far better to relinquish it for a more tranquil nothingness? Intelligence, as it seems to me, is driven to seek for a result; I wish to be informed as to that of my own life! I desire something to enfold and absorb my hours; I cannot endure to feel them for ever surging so heavily over me, lonely and slowly, without desires, without illusions, without end. If my acquaintance with life must be limited to its miseries, is it an advantage to have received it, is it wisdom to continue it?

You will not think that, incapable of coping with the ills of humanity, I dare not endure their fear; you know me better than that. No misfortunes would tempt me to lay down life. The soul is aroused by opposition to a prouder bearing; when we have to battle with great sorrows, we return into our true selves; we take delight in our energy; at least there is something to do. But the embarrassments, the weariness, the constraints, the insipidity of life fatigue and discourage me. The ardent man can nerve himself for suffering, since he has the pretension some day to enjoy, but what consideration can support him who expects nothing? I am weary of leading so vain a life. Truly I might still exercise patience, but my days glide by with nothing of utility accomplished, and wholly without enjoyment, without hope, even as without peace. Do you believe that, given an unconquerable soul, all this could be perpetuated through long years?

I cannot but think that there is also a reason for things in the physical order, and that necessity itself has a coherent course, a kind of end which can be anticipated by intelligence. I inquire sometimes whither I shall be brought by this constraint which binds me to weariness, this apathy from which I can never emerge, this order of things, so null and so tasteless, from which I know not how to liberate myself; where all is deficient, all delays, all fails; where every probability melts away; where effort is turned aside; where each change miscarries; where expectation is ever deceived, even that of the misfortune which is at least formative; where, one would say, that some hostile will endeavours to retain me in a condition of suspension and shackles, to decoy me by vague prospects and evasive hopes, in order to consume my entire span without having attained, produced, or possessed anything.

I review the dejecting vista of the long years which have been squandered. I observe how the future, always so alluring, changes and falls off as it approaches. Smitten with a breath of death at the funereal gleam of the present, it grows pallid from the very moment that we seek to enjoy it, and stripping off the charms which masked it, and the illusion grown stale already, it passes alone, forsaken, dragging heavily its exhausted and ghastly sceptre as if outraged by the fatigue occasioned by the miserable burden of its ever dragging chain. When I forecast this disenchanted space, through which must be drawn the remnants of my youth and my life, when my thoughts endeavour to forecast before the uniform descent where all flows and is lost, do you find anything that I can see to its finish, or aught that may hide from me the abyss in which all finds end? Must I not rather, weary and cast down, assured too fully of my incapacity, go in search at least of repose? And when an inevitable power weighs me down incessantly,

how shall I find that repose unless I myself go forth to it?

An end according to its nature there must be to everything. Since my relative existence is cut off from the course of the world, why should I continue to vegetate for still an indefinite period, useless to that world and a weariness to myself? Shall it be for the empty instinct of going on? For mere breath and progress towards age? To keep awake bitterly when all reposes, and go in quest of darkness when the earth is blossoming. To have only a longing for desires, to know only the dream of existence? To remain misplaced, isolated in the scene of human afflictions, when no one is happy through my instrumentality, when I have only a bare notion of the part of a man? To cling to a lost life, miserable slave whom life rejects, who hugs only its shadow, greedy of existence, as if true existence remained to him, and willing to continue miserably through want of courage to cease from suffering?

What to me are the sophisms of a soft and flattering philosophy, vain disguise of a cowardly instinct, vain wisdom of patients who perpetuate the ills which they have learned to bear so well, legitimising our slavery by appealing to some fancied necessity.

Wait, they will say to me, moral evil works itself out by the mere fact of its duration; wait, the times will alter, and you will be satisfied in the end, or if they continue the same, you will yourself suffer alteration. By making use of the present as it is, you will have weakened that too ardent desire for a better future, and having learned how to endure life, it will become a boon to your more tranquil heart.—Passion ceases, loss passes out of memory, misfortune retrieves itself; for me, I have no passions, I complain neither of loss nor misfortune, of nothing which can cease, nothing which can be forgotten, nothing which can

be retrieved. A new passion affords a distraction from one that has grown stale, but where shall I find a nourishment for my heart when it shall have lost that thirst which consumes it? It desires all, it asks all, it contains all. What can be put in place of that infinite which my thought demands? Regrets are forgotten, other benefits replace them, but what benefits can lull universal regrets? All that is proper to human nature belongs to my being; it has sought nourishment conformed to its nature, and it has emptied itself upon an impalpable shadow. Know you of any blessing which compensates for the regret of a world? If my woe is in the nothingness of my life, will time soothe evils which time aggravates, and must I hope that they will cease when it is by the very fact of their duration that they are past bearing?—Wait, better times will perchance bring about that which appears to be denied by your present destiny.—Men of a single day, who scheme and grow old in scheming, who reason about a remote future when death is at your door, dreaming of consoling illusions amidst the instability of things, do you never realise the rapidity of their course? Do you not see that your life falls asleep in the act of balancing itself, and that this vicissitude which sustains your deceived heart agitates only to extinguish it in a last shock close at hand? Were the life of man perpetual, were it even longer than it is, if it were uniform to its final hour, then hope might seduce me, and I should perchance await that which might at least be possible. But is there any permanence in life? Can the day to come minister to the needs of the day that is here, and that which is requisite now, will it be good tomorrow? Our heart suffers changes more rapidly than the year with its seasons; their vicissitudes are at least subject to a certain constancy since they recur in the succession of the ages. But our days, which know not any renewal,

have no two hours alike: their seasons, which are never restored, have each its own needs; if one have lost that which belongs to it, it has lost it past all retrieving, and no other age can possess that which has not been attained by our prime.—It is the prerogative of the madman to pretend to strive against necessity. The wise man accepts things as they are offered by destiny, he endeavours only to consider them in those relations which can render them fortunate for him; without disturbing himself to no purpose as to the way in which he travels on this globe, he has learned how to insure, at each tarrying-place which marks his course, at once the advantages of the expedient and the security of repose; and seeing that he must soon attain the term of his journey, he goes forward without effort, goes astray even without anxiety. What would it profit him to wish for more, to set himself against the force of the world, or seek to avoid shackles and inevitable ruin? No individual can arrest the universal course, and nothing is vainer than to cry out against evils which inhere necessarily in our nature.—But if all be of necessity, what do you pretend to offer in opposition to all my weariness? Why blame it? Can I feel differently? If, on the contrary, our particular destiny is in our hands, if man can choose and will, there must yet remain for him those obstacles which he cannot overcome, those miseries which he cannot avert from his life; but all human effort can do no more against him than destroy him. He alone can be made subject to all who is resolved absolutely to live, but he who pretends to nothing can be made subject to nothing. You require that I should be resigned to unavoidable evils; I could also wish it; but when I consent to relinquish everything, inevitable evils exist for me no longer.

The many blessings which remain to man even in the midst of misfortune cannot detain me. Blessings are more

numerous than evils; that is true in the absolute sense, and still it is a strange self-deception to reason in this manner. A single evil which we cannot efface destroys the effect of twenty blessings which we appear to enjoy, and, in spite of the assurances of reason, there are many evils, the assuagement of which requires time and toil, except indeed for the sectarian with a taint of fanaticism. Time, it is true, dissipates these evils, and the resistance of the wise man exhausts them still more quickly; but they have been so multiplied by the sedulous imagination of other men that new evils will always be substituted before their term; and seeing that blessings pass away equally with sufferings, if man has ten pleasures for every pain, but if one single pain corrupts a hundred pleasures during all his span, life will at least be indifferent and useless to him who has parted with all his illusions. The ill remains, the good ceases; by what allurement, to what end should I go on enduring life? The upshot is known; what remains to be done? The truly irreparable loss is that of the desires.

I know that a natural proclivity binds man to life; but it is in some sense an instinct of habit and in nowise proves that life is good. The living being, by the fact of its existence, must cling to existence; reason alone can make it gaze without terror upon the void. It is remarkable that man, whose reason so much affects to despise instinct, authorises the most blind of all to justify the sophisms of reason.

It will be objected that habitual impatience connects with the impetuosity of the passions, and that the aged cling to life in proportion as they are calmed and illuminated by the years. I will not pause to ask whether the reason which is in course of extinction is worth more th that faculty in its prime; whether each epoch has n

appropriate way of feeling which would be out of place at any other epoch; if, in fine, our unproductive institutions, our greybeard virtues, the achievement of caducity, at least in their principle, prove substantially in favour of frigid old age. I should answer only: Every alloyed thing is regretted at the moment of its loss; an irretrievable loss is never regarded apathetically after lengthy possession; our imagination, which in life we find relinquishes a blessing immediately on its acquisition so as to fix our endeavours on that which remains to be gained, lingers, when things come to an end, only over the good which is removed from us, and not over the evil from which we are liberated.

It is not thus that the value of practical life should be estimated for the majority of men. But ask of them each day of that existence, for which they hope unceasingly, whether the present moment contents them, is void of satisfaction, or is to them indifferent; your results will then be certain. All other reckoning is merely a mode of self-deception, and I seek to set a clear and simple truth in place of confused notions and disproved sophistries.

I shall be told seriously: Curb your desires, limit these over-urgent needs, place your affections in things near at hand. Why seek that which is made remote by circumstances? Why insist on that with which men dispense so easily? Why wish for useful things? There are so many who do not give them a thought. Why bemoan public misfortunes? Do you find that they disturb the sleep of any one who is happy? What profit these reasonings of a strong mind, this instinct of things sublime? Is it impossible for you to dream of perfection without assuming to lead in its direction a crowd which laughs at it, even amidst its moaning, and in order to enjoy your life, do you need a grand or simple existence, powerful circumstances, chosen

places, men and things after your own heart? All is good for man provided that he exists, and wherever it is possible for him to live, there he can live contented. Possessed of fair repute, some acquaintances who wish him well, a house and the wherewithal to take his stand in the world, what more does he require?—Assuredly I have nothing to reply to these counsels from the mouth of a mature man, and I hold that, as a fact, they are excellent for those who find them such.

Notwithstanding, I am calmer now, and begin to weary even of my impatience. Sombre yet tranquil ideas become more familiar to me. I recur willingly to those who in the morning of their life have found their eternal night; this thought offers me repose and consolation, it is the instinct of the sunset. But why this need of the darkness? Why is the light irksome to me? They will know some day, when change shall have come for them, when I shall be no more.

When you will be no more! . . . Do you contemplate a crime?

If, weary of the evils of life, and disabused above all as to its benefits, suspended already over the abyss, marked out for the supreme moment, but restrained by the friend, accused by the moralist, condemned by my country, held guilty in the eyes of the social man, I had perforce to make answer to his reproaches, here is what, it seems to me, I might urge—

I have investigated and ascertained all; if I have not actually experienced, I have at least foreseen all. Your sorrows have blighted my soul; they are intolerable because they are purposeless. Your pleasures are illusory, evanescent; a single day suffices to taste and relinquish them. I have sought happiness within myself, but, apart from fanaticism, I have seen that it was not made for mere man; I

have spoken of it to those who surround me, but they had no leisure to consider it. I have asked the multitude branded by misery and the privileged classes oppressed by weariness; they have told me: "We suffer to-day, but we shall enjoy to-morrow." For myself, I know that the day which approaches follows in the same track as the day which flies. Live you, whom a felicitous illusion can yet deceive; but I, outwearied with that which misdirects hope, without initiative and almost without desire, life is no longer for me. I judge of life like the man going down into the tomb; let it therefore open for me. How should I retard the end when this is already attained? Nature offers illusions for our faith and our love; it lifts the veil only at the moment marked out for death. It has not raised it for you, and so live on; it has raised it for me, life is mine no more.

It may well be that man's true good is his moral independence, and that his miseries are only the consciousness of his own weakness in so many situations; that all without him is as dream, and that peace is in the heart inaccessible to illusions. But on what shall disillusionised thought repose? What can be performed in life when all that it contains has become indifferent? When the passion of all things, when the universal need of strong souls, has consumed our hearts, the charm forsakes our undeceived desires, and irremediable weariness is born of the cold ashes. Funereal, ominous, it absorbs all hope, reigns over ruins, devours, extinguishes; by an invincible effort it hollows our grave, the asylum which shall at least ensure rest by forgetfulness and calm in nothingness.

In the absence of desires what is to be done with life? To go on vegetating stupidly; to drag one's self along the inanimate track of cares and of business; to grovel impotently in the degradation of the slave or the nullity of

the crowd; to think, but without serving the universal order; to feel without being alive! Thus, unfortunate plaything of an unexplained destiny, man will abandon his life to the chances of things and seasons. Thus, deceived by the opposition of his inclinations, his reason, his laws, his nature, he hurries, with elastic step and full of daring, towards the sepulchral night. The eye flashing, yet restless in the midst of phantoms, the heart charged with sorrows, he seeks and goes astray, he vegetates and sleeps.

Harmony of the world, sublime dream! Moral end, social gratitude, laws, duties—words sacred among men! I cannot brave you, save in the opinion of the misguided crowd.

In truth, I abandon some friends whom I shall afflict, my country to which I have so imperfectly returned its benefits, all those men whom I should serve; here are occasions of regret, but not of remorse. Who, more than myself, can realise the value of union, the authority of duties, the joy of service! I hoped to perform some good—it was the most flattering, the most unreasoning of my dreams. In the permanent uncertainty of an existence for ever in disturbance, for ever precarious, enslaved, you all, blind and docile, follow the beaten track of the established order, thus abandoning your life to your habits, and losing it without difficulty, just as you would lose a day. Carried away by this universal aberration, I might also leave some benefits in these paths of error; but all such good, to all so easy, will be performed by good men without me. For such there are; may they flourish and, useful in some way, may they find themselves happy! As for me, in this abyss of evils, I shall be in no sense consoled, I confess, if I do no more. A single unfortunate near me will be assuaged possibly, one hundred thousand will continue to sigh; and I, impotent in the midst of them, shall find ever attributed

to the nature of things the bitter fruits of human deviation, and, as the veritable work of necessity, the perpetuation of those miseries wherein I think that I discern the accidental caprice of a perfectibility which is trying its hand. Let me be condemned severely if I refuse the sacrifice of a happy life to the general welfare; but when, fated to be useless, I invoke a repose too long already awaited, I repeat that I may confess my regrets, but not my remorse.

Under the burden of an evanescent misfortune, having regard to the variability of impressions and events, doubtless I ought to expect more auspicious days. But the evil which weighs down my years is not an evanescent evil. Who shall fill this void through which they flow so tardily? Who shall restore desires to my life and confidence to my will? The good itself I find useless; would that men henceforth might have only evils to deplore! During hours of tempest hope sustains and gives strength against the danger, because that ends, but if the time of calm wearies you, for what then will you hope? If there can be any good in the morrow I will await it gladly, but if such be my destiny that to-morrow, incapable of amelioration, may possibly be still more baneful, I will not behold the calamity of that day.

Supposing it to be really my duty to live out the life which has been given me, doubtless I should gather strength against its miseries; swift time will bear them speedily away. Howsoever burdened our days, they remain bearable because they are limited. Death and life are in my power. I do not cling to the one, and in no sense do I covet the other, but let reason decide whether I have the right to choose between them.

It is a crime, I am told, to forsake life. But those same sophists who forbid me death expose or hurry me thereto. Their innovations multiply it about me, their

precepts lead me up to it, or their laws prescribe it for me. It is a glory to renounce life when it is good, a justice to slay him who would keep alive; and that death which should be sought when it is dreaded it would be crime to embrace when it is desired! You make sport of my existence under a hundred specious or ridiculous pretexts; I alone have no rights over myself! When I love life, I must disdain it; when I am happy, you send me forth to die; but if I wish for death, it is then that you forbid me that refuge; you impose life upon me when I abhor it!

If I cannot take away my life, I cannot also expose myself to a probable death. Is this the prudence which you exact from your subjects? On the field of battle they must calculate the chances before marching up to the enemy, and all your heroes are criminals. They are not justified by the order which you give to them, for you have no right to send them forth to their death, if they, on their part, had no right of consent to go there. An identical madness authorises your extravagances and dictates your precepts, and so much inconsequence is to justify so much injustice!

If I have no such right of death over myself, who has given it to society? Have I ceded what I do not possess? What social principle do you devise by which it can be explained to me how a body acquires an internal and reciprocal power which is not possessed by its members, and how I have delegated for my own oppression a prerogative which was not mine even for escape from oppression? Will it be affirmed that if man in isolation does have this natural privilege, he alienates it by becoming a member of society! But such right is inalienable by its nature, and no one can enter into a compact which deprives him of all power of withdrawal when it is used

to his prejudice. By others before me it has been demonstrated that man has no title to renounce his freedom, or, in other words, to cease from being man; how then should he waive the most essential, most sure, most irresistible right of that freedom, the one alone which guarantees his independence and remains always with him against misfortune? How long will absurdities so palpable continue to enslave men?

If it could be a crime to relinquish life, it is you that I should accuse, you whose baleful innovations have led me to wish for death, which, independently of you, I should have staved off; that death, the universal loss which nothing repairs, even that mournful and last refuge which you dare to forbid me, as if you had some hold over my final hour, as if there also the forms of your legislation could restrict rights lying outside the world which it governs. Oppress my life, law is frequently also the strongest right, but death is the limit which I seek to oppose to your power. Elsewhere you may command; as to this you must show your proof.

Tell me clearly, without your habitual circumlocution, without that vain eloquence of words which cannot deceive me, without those great misinterpreted names of force, virtue, eternal order, moral destiny — tell me simply whether the laws of society are made for the actual and visible world, or for a future existence which is remote? If they are made for the actual world, tell me how the laws which are relative to a given order of things can impose an obligation when such order exists no longer; how that which governs life can obtain beyond it; how that fashion, in conformity with which we have determined our relations, can subsist when those relations have ended; and how it is possible that I could ever have consented that our conventions should bind me when I no longer

wished it. What is the foundation, let me say rather, the pretext of your laws? Have they not promised the happiness of all? When I wish for death, to all appearance I do not find myself happy. Should the contract which burdens me be irrevocable? An onerous engagement as to particular concerns of life may find at least its compensations, and sacrifice can be made of an advantage when the power of possessing others remains to us; but can total abnegation enter into the conception of a man who preserves any notion of right and truth? Every society is based on a combination of powers, an exchange of services; but when I do harm to society does it not refuse to protect me? If, therefore, it does nothing for me, or does indeed much against me, I also have the right to refuse it my service. Our compact no longer suits it, therefore it breaks it; our compact suits me no longer, I break it also. I do not rebel, I go forth.

It is a final effort of your jealous tyranny. Too many victims escape you; too many evidences of public misery rise up against the vain noise of your promises, and display your astute codes in their barren nakedness and their bankrupt ineptitude. I was too simple when I spoke to you of justice! I noticed the pitying smile in your parental glance. It assured me that force and interests lead men. You have so ordered it. Well then, how shall your law be maintained? Who shall avenge its infraction? Shall it affect him who is no more? Shall it visit a pitiable effort on those who belong to him? Oh useless madness! Multiply our miseries, that is necessary for the great things which you plan, necessary for the quality of glory which you seek; enslave, torment, but have at least an end; be iniquitous and coldly atrocious, but at least be not these in vain. What a mockery is that law of servitude which is neither obeyed nor vindicated!

Where your power ends your impositions begin, so essential is it to your empire that you should never cease to make sport of man! It is nature, it is supreme intelligence which will me to bow my head under the insolent and grinding yoke, will that I should hug my chain and drag it with docility till the moment comes when you are pleased to break it over my head. Whatsoever you do, a God has put my life in your hands, and the order of the world would be inverted did your slave escape.

The Eternal, you tell me, has conferred existence upon me, and has imposed my part also in the harmony of His works; I ought to fulfil it to the end, I have no right to emancipate myself from His empire. You forget too quickly that soul with which you have endowed me. This earthly body is but dust, do you not remember? But my intelligence, breath imperishable emanated from the universal intelligence, can never be emancipated from His law. How should I quit the empire of the Master of all things? I change place only; places are nothing for him who contains and governs all things. He has not set me more exclusively on earth than in the country where He willed me to be born.

Nature watches over my preservation; I should also preserve myself to obey her laws, and since she has imparted to me the fear of death, she forbids me to seek it.—That is a fine phrase, but Nature preserves or immolates me at will; or at least, in this respect, the course of things has no ascertained law. I desire to live, and a gulf opens to swallow me, the bolt descends to blast me. If Nature takes away my life when I love it, I take it myself when I have ceased to love it any longer. If it snatches some blessing away from me, I reject some evil; if it devotes my existence to the arbitrary course of events, I quit or

keep it as I choose. Since it has given me the faculty of willing and of choosing, I make use of it in a case where I have to decide between the greatest of interests, nor do I understand that the use of the liberty received from her to make choice of that which she inspires, is to offer outrage thereto. Being myself the work of Nature, I interrogate her laws, and there I find my freedom. Placed in the social order, I make answer to the false precepts of moralists, and I reject the laws which no legislator has the right to enact.

As to all which is not interdicted by a superior and evident law, my law is my desire, because it is the sign of a natural impulse; it is my right by the mere fact that it is my desire. Life is no boon for me if, disillusionised as to its blessings, I have only its evils; it is then my bale. I set it aside; it is the right of that being who chooses and wills.

If I make bold to judge where most hesitate, it is by deep conviction; my decision may conform to my needs, but is prompted by no partiality; I may be mistaken, but will affirm that I am not guilty, not seeing how I could well be so.

My design was to ascertain what was open to me. I do not say what I shall do. I have neither despair nor passion; enough for my security to be assured that the useless burden can be cast off when it weighs me down too much. Long since has life fatigued me; from day to day it increases my weariness; yet I am not in any sense exasperated. I also discover some antipathy to the utter loss of my being. Were it necessary to choose at once whether I should burst all bonds or remain in them irrevocably for forty years, I should not, I think, hesitate long; but I am the less in haste, because in a few months my possibilities will be the same, and the Alps alone are suited to the mode in which I should wish to find extinction.

LETTER XLII

LYONS, *May* 29 (VI).

From beginning to end I have read and re-read your letter several times; it is the outcome of too keen an interest. I respect the friendly feeling which misleads you, and I will admit that I was not altogether so alone as I tried to make out. You exhibit most laudable motives in an ingenious manner; but believe me, that though much may be urged to the impassioned man who is impelled by despair, there is not one word of weight forthcoming in reply to the tranquil man who reasons on his death.

It is not that I have come to any decision. Weariness overwhelms me, loathing crushes me. I know that all this evil is within me. Why cannot I rest content with eating and sleeping? For in the end I eat and I sleep, nor is the life which I drag on exceedingly miserable. Taken separately, my days are bearable, but their sum overwhelms me. Activity in accordance with his nature is necessary to the organised being. Will it satisfy him that he is properly sheltered, is warmly and softly bedded, is nourished on choice fruits, stayed about by the voice of waters and the fragrance of flowers? Ah, but ye hold him captive! This softness enervates him, these essences importune him, these chosen aliments do not nourish him! Take back your gifts and your chains; let him act, let him suffer even; let him act, for this is to enjoy and to live.

Apathy notwithstanding has become my second nature. The very notion of an active life would seem to terrify or astonish me. Things that are circumscribed repel me, and yet their habit cleaves to me; things that are sublime allure me, but my indolence dreads them. I know not that which I am, that which I love or desire. I bemoan

myself with no cause, desire having no object, and discern nothing except that I am out of my true place.

This prerogative which man cannot forfeit, this privilege of ceasing to be, I reflect upon it, not as the object of an invariable longing, nor as that of an irrepealable resolve, but as the consolation which remains amidst prolonged tribulations, as the limit, within reach always, of disgust and importunity.

You remind me of the concluding sentence in one of Lord Edward's letters. I find no evidence against me therein. As to the principle itself, I am of the same way of thinking, but the law admitting no exception which forbids us to lay down life voluntarily would not appear to follow from it.

The morality of man and his enthusiasm, the restlessness of his aims, his inherent need of expansion, seem to proclaim that his end is not in fleeting things; that his activity is not confined to the shadows which we see; that his thought has necessary and eternal concepts for its objects; that his call is to labour for the amelioration or reparation of the world; that his destiny is in some sort to elaborate, to rarefy, to organise, to impart more energy to matter, more power to existences, more perfection to organs, more fecundity to germs, more directness to the analogies of things, more empire to order.

Some consider him to be the agent of Nature, employed by her to complete and polish her work, to set in operation so much of brute matter as is accessible to him; to subject formless composites to the laws of harmony, to purify metals, to improve plants, to decompose or combine elements, to change gross into refined substances and inert into active matter, to draw less advanced beings nearer to himself, and to raise and advance himself towards the universal principle of fire, light, order and harmony.

On this hypothesis, man who is held worthy of so magnificent a ministry, conqueror of obstacles and loathings, should assuredly remain at his post to the last moment. I respect such constancy, but that it is his post is not demonstrated to my mind. If man survives apparent death, why, I repeat it, is his exclusive station rather on earth than in the state or place of his origin? If, on the other hand, death is the unquestionable term of his existence, with what can he be charged, unless indeed it is with some social amelioration? He has his duties, but, necessarily limited to the present life, they can neither bind him beyond nor make it binding that he should remain in bond. In the social order he will be expected to maintain the order; amidst men he must serve men. Indubitably, the virtuous person will not forego life so long as he can be serviceable therein; for him service and happiness are synonymous. If he suffers, but at the same time is effecting substantial good, he is rather satisfied than the reverse. But when the evil which he undergoes is greater than the good which he performs, it must be open to him to relinquish all; he ought indeed to do so when he is at once useless and unfortunate, could he be assured that, in both respects, there will be no improvement in his lot. Life has been conferred on him apart from consent of his; if still forced to conserve it, what liberty would remain to him? He can alienate his other rights, but this is imprescriptible; deprived of such a last refuge, his dependence is frightful. To suffer much in order to be a little useful is a virtue which can be inculcated in life, but not a duty which can be imposed on those who withdraw from it. So long as you use things, it is an obligatory virtue; it is on such conditions that you possess the freedom of the city; but when you renounce the contract, that contract ceases to bind you. What, further, is to be understood

by being useful, when it is said that each one of us can be so? The shoemaker who is good at his work saves inconvenience to his customers, yet I doubt whether such a man, if peculiarly unfortunate, is in conscience obliged to go on till he is struck down by paralysis, simply to multiply satisfactory measurements of the foot. When this is the quality of our usefulness, we may well be permitted to cease from exercising it. A man frequently evokes admiration by the way he supports life, but this is not to say that he shall always be compelled to endure it.

Here, as it seems to me, are many words about a very simple matter. Yet, simple as I find it, do not deem that I am stubborn over the question, or ascribe more importance to the voluntary act which puts a period to life than to any other deed of that life. I do not see that to die can be so great a matter; so many men perish with no time to think about it, or even to know it! A voluntary death must be deliberate, no doubt, but this is true of all actions which are not limited in their consequences to the present moment.

When a situation becomes probable, observe also what it may exact from us. It is well to have thought of it beforehand, in order not to be compelled in the alternative to act without having deliberated or to lose in deliberations the opportunity of action. A man who, with no prescribed principles for his guidance, finds himself alone with a woman does not begin reasoning about his duties; he begins by failing as regards his most sacred engagements; he may think about them possibly later on. In like manner, how many heroic actions would have missed accomplishment had it been needful, before risking life, to spend an hour in their discussion!

Once more, remember that I have made no resolve, but

I like to bear in mind that a resource infallible in its nature, and the remembrance of which may often abate my impatience, is not interdicted me.

LETTER XLIII

LYONS, *May* 30 (VI).

La Bruyère has remarked: "I should not think it a hateful situation if my full trust committed me to a reasonable person to be governed by him in all things, both absolutely and for ever. I should be assured of doing well without the anxiety of deliberation. I should enjoy the tranquillity of him who is ruled by reason."

For myself, I assure you that I would become a slave with a view to independence, but I say this to you only. I know not whether you will term this a drollery. A man entrusted with a certain part in the world, who can shape things to his will, has undoubtedly more freedom than a slave, or there is more satisfaction at least in his life, since he can follow it after his own manner. But there are others who are trammelled on all sides. If they attempt a single movement, the inextricable chain which enfolds them draws them back into nullity; it is a spring which reacts in proportion to the power with which it is pulled. What can you expect of the victim who is thus embarrassed? Despite his apparent liberty, he can produce, outside the acts of his life, no more than a man whose life is wasted in a dungeon. Those who have chanced upon a weak corner of their cage, where fate has forgotten to rivet the bolts, taking credit for this fortunate accident, come forward and cry to you: Courage! Enterprise is needed, boldness wanted; do like us.—They fail to perceive that it is scarcely they who have acted. I do not

mean that chance brings about human affairs, but I think that these are overruled, at least in part, by a power alien to man, and that a concurrence independent of our will is essential to success.

Were there no moral force which modifies what we term the probabilities of chance, the course of the world would be in a much greater state of uncertainty. A calculation would change more frequently the fortunes of a people; every destiny would be subject to some obscure computation; the world would be the opposite of what it is; there would be an end to laws because they would be devoid of consequence. Who does not recognise that all this is impossible? It would involve a contradiction; good men would be free to fulfil their projects!

If there be no general force which impels all things, what strange fascination prevents men from perceiving that in order to have Roman candles, elastic cravats and baptismal comfits, they have so disposed everything that one fault or one occurrence can brand and corrupt a man's entire existence? Because a woman has forgotten the future for a few moments, nothing in that future remains to her but nine months of bitter solicitude and a life of scorn. The odious scatterbrain who has just killed his victim to-morrow parts with his health for ever by forgetting in his turn. And you do not see that such a condition of things, where a single incident wrecks a moral life or a single caprice annihilates a thousand men, all that which you term the social edifice, is but a congeries of masked miseries and illusory errors, and that you are comparable to those children who believe that their playthings are precious because they are covered with gold paper. You remark tranquilly: "Such is the way of the world." There is no question, and is it not proof positive that we are nothing else in the universe than antic figures which a juggler dances,

marshals one against another, and bandies about in all manners; compels them to laugh, to fight, to weep, to skip, and all to amuse—whom? In truth, I know not. But that is why I could wish to be a slave; my will would then be in subjection, but my thought free. On the other hand, in this my pretended independence, I must act in accordance with my thought. I am unable to do so all the same, nor do I clearly understand the hindrance; it follows that my whole nature is in bondage without having the will to suffer.

I do not altogether know what I want. Happy is he who seeks only to stick to his business; he can set his object before him. I am deeply conscious that no great thing, not one of all the things which are possible to man and are conceived as sublime in his thought, is beyond the reach of my nature, and yet I feel equally that my end is missing, my life squandered and made barren; already it is smitten with death; its emotion is no less vain than immoderate; powerful, it is yet unproductive, idle, and eager amidst the tranquil and eternal industry of all that lives. I do not know what to will, and hence I must will all things, for in fine I can find no repose when I am consumed with desires; I can pause at nothing in the void. I long to be happy! But what man has the right to exact happiness on an earth where well-nigh all things are exhausted in the sole attempt to lessen their miseries.

If the peace of felicity be denied me, I must have the activity of a strong life. Truly, I have no desire to range from grade to grade, to assume a place in society, to have superiors, who are confessedly such, so that I may in turn have inferiors to despise. There is nothing so burlesque as this hierarchy of scorn, descending in proportions so exactly shaded, and including the whole state, from the prince under the obedience of God above, according to his claim, to the poorest shoeblack in the suburb under the

obedience of the female who nightly lodges him on squalid straw. The steward scarcely presumes to walk in the master's chamber, but no sooner is he back in his kitchen, than he is lord of all. The scullion who trembles at his glance you might consider to be the last of mankind. By no means; he orders sternly the poor woman who removes the refuse and obtains a few pence by his patronage. The valet who has charge of messages is a confidential person, and gives commissions of his own to the under-valet who, by reason of a less presentable figure, is relegated to coarser work, while the mendicant who knows his business crushes with all his skill the fellow-beggar who is not blessed with an ulcer.

He only has lived fully whose whole life has been passed in that position which is proper to his character, or he whose genius embraces many objects, who is taken by his destiny into all possible situations, and in each is acquainted with what the situation calls for. In the hour of danger, he is Morgan; as a people's leader, he is Lycurgus; among savages, he is Odosi; with the Greeks, Alcibiades; in the credulous East, he is Zarathustra; he lives in retreat like Philocles; he rules like Trajan; in a savage land he innures himself for times to come, he vanquishes the crocodiles, swims rivers, hunts the wild goat among the frozen rocks, lights his pipe with the lava of a volcano, destroys the polar bear in the vicinity of his retreat, piercing him with the shafts which his own hand has made. But man has so brief a span for life, and the duration of that which he leaves behind him is so full of uncertainties! Were his heart less eager, perhaps his reason would counsel him to live merely without sufferings, diffusing some happiness about him among a few friends worthy to enjoy it without disfiguring his work.

It is said that wise men, by living independently of the passions, live without impatience, and as they regard all

things with the same eye, they find in their quietude the peace and the dignity of being. But great obstacles are frequently set up against this tranquil indifference. To accept the present as it offers, and to despise the hope as well as the fears of the future, there is only one method at once sure, easy and simple, and that is to dismiss from one's notions that future, the thought of which is always anxious because it is always dubious.

To be free from fears and desires all must be abandoned to the event, as if to a species of necessity, for enjoyment or for suffering as it comes, and to make use no less peaceably of the actual moment if the hour which follows it should bring death in its train. A steadfast soul, habituated to high considerations, may attain the indifference of the wise as to all which restless or predisposed persons term misfortunes or blessings, but when it is necessary to ponder over this future how can one be other than anxious? If it be indispensable to arrange everything, to project, to guide, how can solicitude be avoided? Accidents, hindrances, success itself must be foreseen, but to foresee is to fear or to hope concerning them. To act means to will, and to will is to be dependent. The great evil is to be compelled to act freely. The slave has far more opportunity for being truly untrammelled. His duties are personal only; he is led by Nature's law, the law which is natural to man and is therefore simple. He is indeed subject to his master, but the rule as to this is clear. Epictetus was happier than Marcus Aurelius. The slave is exempt from anxieties which are reserved for those who are free; the slave is not incessantly compelled to harmonise himself with the course of outward things, a harmony which is always uncertain and disquieting, the unceasing difficulty of all human life which seeks to rationalise that life. It is assuredly a necessity to think of the future, to be concerned

with it, and to set our affections therein when we are responsible for the destiny of others. Indifference in such a case is no longer permissible; and where is the man, even if apparently isolated, who cannot do good to something and is consequently dispensed from the search after the means of doing so? Where is he whose neglect will never involve other evils than his own?

The sage of Epicurus must have neither wife nor child, and even this is insufficient. Whenever the interests of another are dependent on our prudence, small cares and anxieties must alloy our peace, disturb our soul and even frequently extinguish our genius.

What will befall him who is shackled by such obstacles and is so constituted as to distress himself about them? He will struggle hardly between those cares to which he is sacrificed despite himself, and the disdain which makes him alien to them. He will be neither superior to events, because this he should not be, nor fitted to make good use thereof. He will be variable in wisdom and impatient or awkward in his business; he will do nothing well because he can perform nothing in consonance with his nature. He must be neither father nor husband if he wish to live independently, and he should perhaps not even have friends; but to be thus alone is to live very mournfully and to live uselessly as well. A man who rules the public destiny, who conceives and achieves great things, cannot cleave to one individual in particular; nations are his friends, and as a benefactor of mankind he can dispense with being that of any one man. But in an obscure life it seems to me that we must at least look for some being towards whom we have duties to execute. This philosophical independence is a convenient but a cold life, and any one who is not an enthusiast must find it vapid at the close. It is terrible to end one's days by saying: No heart

has been made happy by my instrumentality; no felicity of man has been of my work; I have lived impassible and null, like the glacier which in mountain caverns has withstood the noonday heat, but has never melted into the valley and ministered by its water to the pasture withered by scorching beams.

Religion, which clears up so many doubtful points, puts a period to all these anxieties; it provides an end which, because it is never attained, is never exposed; it places us in subjection so as to place us in peace with ourselves; the hope of the good things which it holds out abides always with us because we cannot bring it to the test; it averts the idea of nothingness; it averts the passions of life; it disembarrasses us of our hopeless evils and our fleeting blessings, substituting a dream the hope whereof, superior, as it may be, to all real blessings, endures at least until death. If it proclaimed no tremendous chastisements it would appear equally beneficent and solemn, but it precipitates the thought of man towards new abysses. It is based on dogmas which are to many incredible; while desiring its effects they cannot have experience thereof; while regretting its security, they cannot be in enjoyment thereof. They are in search of celestial appearances but see only a mortal dream; they are attracted by the recompense due to the good man, but they do not find that they have deserved it from Nature; they would perpetuate their identity, and they see that all slips away. Whilst the monastic novice, who has scarcely received the tonsure, distinctly hears the angel who celebrates his fasts and his praises, those who have the consciousness of virtue are well aware that they will never attain this height; overwhelmed by their weakness and by the emptiness of their destinies, they have no other anticipation than to desire, to struggle, to pass like the shadow which has known nothing.

LETTER XLIV

LYONS, *June* 15 (VI).

I have read more than once and pondered over your objections, or, if you prefer it, your reproaches; we have a grave question in hand and I am about to attempt a reply. If the hours which are spent in discussion are commonly wasted, this is not the case with those which are devoted to writing.

Do you seriously consider that this opinion which, you say, adds to my misfortune, is one for which I am responsible? I make no question that to believe is the safer course. You also remind me of the assertion that such belief is necessary to the sanction of morality.

Let me observe first of all that I make no pretence to decide, and should even prefer to refrain from denial, but that I find it precipitate, to say the least, to affirm. The disposition to regard as impossible that which we could wish to be true is no doubt a misfortune, but how that misfortune is to be escaped when it has already overtaken us I confess that I do not know.

Death, as you assure me, does not exist for man. You regard the *hic jacet* as impious. Not there under the cold marble and among the extinct ashes is the man of virtue or the man of genius. Who has affirmed it? In this sense the *hic jacet* would be false on the tomb of a dog; his faithful and assiduous instinct are assuredly not there. But where then? It is no more.

You ask me what has become of the vitality, the spirit, the soul of this body which has just passed into dissolution. The answer is very simple. When the fire on your hearth is put out, the light, the heat, the movement, in fine, leave it, as all know, and pass into another world, there to be

rewarded eternally if it has warmed your feet, or eternally punished if it has scorched your slippers. So also the melody of the lyre which has been broken by the ephor will pass on in broken murmurs until it has expiated by more austere sounds those voluptuous modulations by which it once corrupted morals.

You urge that nothing can be destroyed, which is true of an object, of a corpuscle, but not of form, of relation, of faculty. I would indeed that the soul of a good and unfortunate man survived him for an immortal felicity. But if the conception of such heavenly felicity has something of heaven itself, that does not prove it to be anything better than a dream. Doubtless the dogma is at once beautiful and consoling, but the beauty and the consolation which I observe in it does not even furnish me with the hope to believe therein. When a sophist takes upon himself to inform me that if I am under the obedience of his doctrine for the space of ten days, I shall receive at the end of that time the gift of supernatural faculties, shall be invulnerable, young for ever, in the enjoyment of all that is required for happiness, powerful for good, and devoid, as it were, of the wish to do evil, such a dream may no doubt dazzle my imagination, and I may possibly regret its alluring promises, but I shall be unable to perceive that it is true.

In vain will he object that I take no risk in believing it. Did he promise me still more if I could be persuaded that the sun shines at midnight, that would exceed my power. If in the end he confessed to me: In truth I told you a falsehood, and I deceive other people after the same fashion, but do not divulge it, for my object is to console them; might I not reply to him that on this coarse and sodden earth, where, gay or in desolation, some hundreds of millions of immortals debate and suffer in the midst of the

same incertitude, no one has demonstrated yet that it is a duty to tell them something which is regarded as consoling, and to conceal from them that which is true?

Full of disquiet and less or more unhappy, we await constantly the next hour, the day which follows, the year to come. At the end of all we must needs have a life thereafter. So far we have existed without living; hence we shall live some day—an inference more pleasing than accurate. If it is a consolation for the unfortunate, that in itself is an additional reason that I should question its truth. A dream is sufficiently beautiful if it lasts till we fall asleep for ever. Preserve that hope: he is happy who cherishes it. Yet confess that the reason which renders it so universal is not difficult to find.

It is true that we stand to lose nothing by believing it when such a course is possible, but it is also no less true that Pascal was guilty of a puerility when he said: "Believe, because in believing you risk nothing, but much, on the contrary, in not believing." This reasoning is decisive if it is a question of conduct, but it is absurd when it is faith that is asked of us. When has faith ever depended on the will?

The man of virtue can do no other than desire immortality, and they have dared to say after that: It is only the wicked who disbelieve. This foolhardy judgment classes numbers of the wisest and greatest men among those who have an eternal justice to fear. The intolerance of such teaching would be atrocious if it were not so imbecile.

By another error it is argued that every man who thinks that all ends with his death is the enemy of society, necessarily an egoist, and controlled only by prudence in his wickedness. The variations of the human heart were better understood by Helvetius when he said: "There are men so ill-starred in their birth that they could find no happiness but in courses which lead to the gallows."

There are men also who cannot be virtuous save amidst contented men, who participate in all which enjoys and all which suffers, and would be dissatisfied if they were not contributing to the right order of things and the felicity of others. These strive to do well without giving much heed to the pool of brimstone.

It will be objected that in any case the common run of mankind is not thus constituted, that each individual among them seeks only his personal advancement and will be wicked unless he is astutely taken in. This may be true up to a certain point. If men could and never should be undeceived, it would only remain to decide whether public interest confers the prerogative of lying, and whether it is a crime, or at least an evil, to give utterance to the opposing truth. But if this error, useful or passing as such, can have its season only, and if it be unavoidable that one day faith on the word of another will come to an end, must it not then be admitted that all your moral edifice is without foundation, when once this gorgeous scaffolding has collapsed? By the adoption of methods which more easily and shortly assure the present, you expose the future to a subversion which will perhaps be without remedy. Had you, on the other hand, been capable of discovering in the human heart the natural groundwork of its morality—had you known how to infuse therein what may have been wanting in the social mode, in the customs of the city—your labour, greater, it is true, in its difficulty, and calling for higher skill, would have been lasting as the world.

If therefore it happened, that, unconvinced of that which many of the most venerated among you have not themselves believed, you were told: The nations are beginning to desire things certain, and to distinguish things positive; ethics are in course of modification, faith exists no longer;

independently of a future life, we must set about demonstrating to men that justice is necessary to their hearts; that, as regards the individual himself, there is no happiness apart from reason; and that the virtues are laws of Nature, no less needful to man in society than those which govern the demands of the senses. If, I say to you, some among those just men who are the friends of order by their nature, whose first necessity is to direct mankind to further union, harmony, and enjoyments; if, leaving in doubt that which has never been proved, they recalled those principles of justice and universal love which cannot be put in question, and took upon themselves to speak of the unchangeable ways of happiness; if, transported by the truth which they feel, which they see, which you yourselves recognise, they consecrated their life to make it known after divers manners and to enforce it reasonably—forgive it, you who are ministers of a certain phase of truth, forgive those methods which are not actually yours; consider, I beseech you, that stoning has passed out of fashion, that modern miracles have fallen into not a little derision, that times are changed, and that it is necessary for you to change with them.

I leave here the interpreters of heaven whose great character renders them signally serviceable or baneful, wholly good or of unmixed wickedness, venerable on the one or contemptible on the other hand. I return to your letter. I do not deal with all its points, which would make my own too long, but I could not set aside what is, in effect, a specious objection without remarking that it is not as well founded as it might appear to be at first sight.

Nature is governed by unknown forces and in accordance with mysterious laws; order is its measure, intelligence is its motive force. It may be advanced that there is no such great distance between these proven findings, which

the terrors of the future have restrained few persons who were disposed to restraint by no other considerations? As for the rest of men, checks more natural, more direct and hence more powerful, operate on them. Man being endowed with the consciousness of order, which is therefore inherent in his nature, he is forced to make the need of it sensible to all individuals. The criminals would have been fewer than those which have been left in spite of your dogmas, and you would have had, at least, all those which they make.

It is said that first transgressions fill the heart immediately with the torture of remorse and leave behind them that trouble for ever; they say also that an atheist, to be consistent, must steal from his friend and assassinate his enemy. These are specimens of the contradictions which I find in the apologies of the defenders of the faith. And yet such discrepancies should be impossible, since those who write upon matters of revelation are denied all excuse for incertitude and variations; and are indeed so remote therefrom that the very semblance is to them unpardonable, when met with in profane persons who claim only their share of a weak and uninspired reason, of doubt and not infallibility.

What does it matter, the apologists go on to ask, if a man is content with himself when he does not believe in a life to come? It is of consequence to the peace of the present life, which in such case is everything.

Apart from immortality, they continue, what would the virtuous person gain by well-doing? He would be the gainer by just so much as the man of virtue values, and he loses only that which is unesteemed by the man of virtue, that, namely, which your passions hanker after frequently in spite of your belief.

You recognise no motive apart from the hope and fear

of the life beyond; and yet cannot the tendency towards order be an integral part of our inclinations, of our instinct, even as the tendency to self-preservation or to reproduction? Is it nothing to dwell in the calm and security of the just?

In the too exclusive disposition to connect every generous sentiment, every upright and pure idea, with your immortal desires and your heavenly conceptions, you assume always that whatsoever is not supernatural must be vile; that all which does not uplift mankind to the abode of the beatitudes must of necessity abase him to the level of the brute; that earthly virtues are only a ragged vesture; and that a soul which is limited to this life can have only infamous propensities and shameful thoughts. Thus, the just and good man who, after forty years of patience amidst suffering, of equity amongst rogues, and of generous endeavour which ought to be requited by heaven, comes to recognise the error of the dogmas which were once his consolation and sustained his laborious life with the expectation of an eternal rest; the sage whose soul is nourished by the calmness of virtue, and for whom well-doing is life, changing his present inclinations because he has changed his system of the future, and no longer seeking actual felicity because that cannot last for ever, must perforce plot perfidy against the old friend who has never doubted him. He must perforce be engrossed by sordid but secret devices for obtaining wealth and power, and, provided that he can elude the justice of men, must necessarily believe henceforward that it is his interest to deceive the good, oppress the unfortunate, preserve only as a precaution the guise of the honest man, and cherish in his bosom all those vices which heretofore he had abhorred. Seriously, I should dislike putting similar points to your sectaries, your men of an exclusive virtue; if they denied the suggestion, I

should say that they were wholly inconsequent. Now, we must never lose sight of the fact that inspired persons have no excuse for inconsequence; and they would call for our pity did they dare to advance the affirmative.

If the notion of immortality has all the characteristics of a magnificent dream, that of annihilation is not susceptible of a severe demonstration. The good man desires of necessity that he should not perish entirely: is not this sufficient ground to confirm it?

Were the hope of a life to come indispensable to just action in this, such vague possibility would still be sufficient. For him who orders his life reasonably, it is superfluous; considerations of the present time may afford him less satisfaction but do not persuade him less; he has a present need of being just. Other men pay attention only to the interests of the moment. They think of paradise when there is a question of religious rites; but in moral questions the fear of consequences, that of opinion, of the laws, the inclinations of the soul, these are their only rule. Imaginary duties are faithfully fulfilled by some; true duties are sacrificed by very nearly all in the absence of temporal danger.

Endow man with justice of mind and excellence of heart, and you will have such a majority of the good that the remainder will be drawn to follow them, even by their most direct and most material interests. On the contrary, you make minds false and souls narrow. For the space of thirty centuries the consequences are worthy the wisdom of the means. All varieties of constraint have fatal effects and ephemeral results; in the last resource there must be persuasion.

I find some difficulty in leaving a subject which is not less important than inexhaustible.

I am so far from having a bias against Christianity that in some sense I may be said to deplore what most of its

zealots would not dream of deploring themselves. I lament sincerely, as they do, the loss of Christianity, with this difference however, that they regret it as it is, or as it was even a century ago, while for myself I do not regard the Christianity of this order as so great a loss.

The victors, the slaves, the poets, the *pagan* priests and the muses succeeded in disfiguring the traditions of antique wisdom by dint of the fusion of races, the destruction of documents, the explanation and confusion of allegories, the desertion of the true and the deep sense in favour of absurd ideas which minister to the love of wonder, and the personification of abstract beings to multiply objects for adoration.

Sublime concepts became abased. The Principle of Life, Intelligence, Light, the Eternal, was henceforth the spouse of Juno; Harmony, Fruitfulness, the bond of living beings, were henceforth but the lover of Adonis; imperishable Wisdom was known henceforth only by the owl attributed to it; the grand ideas of immortality and reward were comprised in the terror of turning a wheel and in the hope of wandering beneath green branches. The indivisible Divinity was distinguished into a hierarchic multitude actuated by sorry passions; the product of the genius of primæval races, the emblems of universal laws, were henceforth but practices of superstition, raising laughter in the children of the town.

Rome changed a part of the world, and Rome suffered change herself. The West, perturbed, agitated, oppressed, or menaced, learned and deceived, ignorant and disabused, had lost all without replacing anything; still slumbering in error, it was astonished already with the confused noise of the truths sought by science.

An identical tyranny, similar interests, the same terror, the like spirit of resentment and vengeance against the people-king, made all the nations kin. Their customs were

broken, their constitutions no longer existed; the love of the city, the spirit of separatism, of isolation, of hate towards strangers, became weakened in the common desire of resisting the conquerors or in the necessity for assuming the yoke of their laws; the name of Rome conjoined all. The old religions of the people had become mere provincial traditions, the God of the Capitol caused their gods to be forgotten, and the apotheosis of the emperors made even that deity pass into oblivion. The most popular altars were those of the Cæsars.

It was one of the great epochs in the history of the world; some majestic and simple edifice must be raised over these ruins of so many regions.

An ethical belief was necessary, since the pure ethic was misunderstood, and dogmas, impenetrable perhaps but not ridiculous, since the light was increasing. As all worships were degraded, there was need of a worship majestic and worthy of man, who seeks to exalt his soul by the conception of a God of the world. Imposing, rare, satisfying, mysterious yet simple rites were wanted, rites, so to speak, supernatural, but in harmony at once with the reason and the heart of man. In a word, there was required what a great genius could alone establish, and I can hint at alone.

But you have fabricated, collected, experimented, corrected, renewed I know not what incoherent mass of trivial ceremonies and doctrines not a little calculated to scandalise the weak; you have combined this fortuitous compost with an ethic at times false, often very beautiful, and in all austere, the one point over which you have not proved unskilful. You pass some hundreds of years in arranging all this by inspiration and your slow work, repaired sedulously, but faulty in its conception, is not made to last approximately longer than the time that you have taken in completing it.

Never was there a clumsiness more astonishing than to confide the priesthood to the first comers, and to have a horde of the men of God. A sacrifice, the nature of which was essentially unity, was multiplied out of all measure. The direct consequences and appropriateness of the moment seem to have been discerned alone; offerers of sacrifice and confessors sprang up on all sides, priests and monks everywhere, busying themselves with all things, and everywhere also were troops of them in luxury or beggary. Such a multitude is said to be convenient for the faithful. But it is good only in so far that the people thus finds all its requirements at the street-corner. It is senseless to intrust religious functions to myriads, for they are thus continually abandoned to the last of men; it is the compromise of their dignity, the obliteration of the sacred seal in an incessant commerce, the material advancement of the moment wherein all must perish which has not imperishable foundations.

LETTER XLV

CHESSEL, *July* 27 (VI).

I have never thought it a weakness to mourn over those evils which are in no sense personal, for the misfortune which is foreign to ourselves, but is yet well known to us. And he is dead—in itself a thing of no moment, for who is there that does not die? This man, however, has been uniformly unfortunate and sorrowful; existence has never been a blessing to him; he has been acquainted only with misfortunes, and now he has no longer anything. I have known him, I have condoled with him; he had earned my respect because he was unhappy and virtuous. In his misfortune there was no pre-eminence, but from hi

return for the arable land which he had bestowed on the monks of Clairvaux, a hundred times the extent in acres arable by the heavenly plough. It is certain that the Mogul empire is highly prosperous when its ruler weighs two pounds more than last year. It is certain that the soul survives the body unless it is crushed by the sudden fall of a rock, in which case it has not the time to escape, and must die there and then. Every one knows that comets are in the habit of engendering monsters, and that excellent recipes are in existence to guard against this contagion. Every one admits that an individual unit on this tiny globe, where creep our imperishable geniuses, has discovered the laws which rule the movement and the respective positions of a hundred myriads of worlds. We are superlatively certain, and it is pure malice if all ages and nations mutually accuse each other of error.

Why should we endeavour to ridicule the ancients who regarded numbers as the universal principle? Do not forces, extension, duration, all properties of natural things, follow the laws of numbers? Is not that which is at once real and mysterious that also which makes for our advancement in the profundities of natural secrets? Is she not herself a perpetual expression of the evident and the mysterious, the visible and impenetrable, the calculable and the infinite, the demonstrated and the inconceivable, comprising all the principles of being and all the vanity of dreams? She manifests before us, and we do not perceive her; we have analysed her laws, but cannot conceive her processes; she enables us to demonstrate that we might move a globe, but the motion of an insect is the abyss in which she abandons us. She confers on us an instant of existence in the midst of nothingness; she brings us forth and she suppresses us; she produces us in order that we may once have been. She endows us with an eye capable of beholding everything; she

sets before it all the mechanism, all the organisation of things, all the marvels of infinite being; we look, we are on the verge of self-knowledge, and then she closes for ever that eye so admirably fashioned.

Why, therefore, O ye who pass in a day, do ye seek for certitudes, and how long must we testify to our dreams before your vanity admits them within its knowledge? You appear less small when you are ignorant. You would have us say to you when discoursing of Nature, like your scales and ciphers: This is so; this is not so. . . . Well and good: here is a romance; learn, and be convinced.

Number is defined by our dictionaries as a collection of units, so that unity, which is the principle of all numbers, becomes foreign to the term which expresses them. I regret that our language has no word which comprehends unity, with all its products less or more direct, and less or more complex. Let us both assume that the word number bears this meaning, and as I have a dream to recount to you, I shall adopt something of the accent befitting the great truths which I shall despatch to you by to-morrow's post.

Pay attention to the voice of antiquity, though it was unacquainted with the calculus of fluxions.

Number is the principle of every dimension, every harmony, every quality, every composite; it is the law of the organised universe.

Without the laws of numbers, matter would be a formless, undigested mass; it would be chaos, in a word. The world is matter arranged accordin[illegible] to numerical laws; their necessity is destiny; thei[illegible] and their qualities are nature, and the universal [illegible] qualities is God.

The analogies of these qualities make up [illegible] secret of all initiations, principle of all d[illegible] of every cultus, source of mor[illegible]

I pass on, and you will appreciate my discretion, for I might trace out the affiliation of all cabalistic and religious ideas. I might refer the various forms of fire-worship to numbers; I might prove that the very conception of pure spirit is the result of certain calculations; I might press into the same sequence whatsoever has conquered or cajoled human intelligence. This glimpse of a mysterious world would not be devoid of interest, but would be worth less than the numerical fragrance exhaled by seven blossoms of jasmine, borne away by the wind and lost in the dust of your terrace at Chessel.

In the absence of numbers notwithstanding, there would be neither flowers nor terrace. Every phenomenon is number or proportion. Forms, space, duration are effects, products of number, which, in its turn, is produced, modified and perpetuated only by itself. Music, in other words the science of all harmony, is an expression of numbers. Our own artificial music, the source perhaps of the strongest emotions which can be experienced by man, is based on numbers.

If I were proficient in astrology, I could enforce many further points; but to sum up, is not all life regulated in accordance with numbers? Without these, who would know the hour fixed for a service, a burial? Who without these could dance? Who would know the auspicious time even for paring his nails?

One is assuredly the principle or the image of all unity, and hence of every completed work, of every conception, every project, every fulfilment, of perfection itself, and of harmony. Thus, every complex number is one, every perception one, even as the universe is one.

The number one is to the engendered numbers as red is to colours, or Adam to the generations of humanity. Adam was the first man, and the name Adam signifies red, for which reason the matter of the Great Work is also termed Adam

when it has arrived at the red, because the red quintessence of the universe is like Adam, who was formed of the quintessence by Adonai.

Pythagoras said: "Cultivate with assiduity the science of numbers; our vices and our crimes are only errors of calculation." This utterance, so useful and so profound in its truth, is doubtless the best that can be urged concerning numbers. Here is something, however, which was not remarked by Pythagoras.

Without the number One, there could be neither two nor three, and hence unity is the universal principle. One is infinite by virtue of that which comes forth from it; it produces two co-eternally, and even three, whence come all the rest. Though infinite, it is impenetrable; it is certainly in all; it cannot cease, it has been made by none, it knows not change; and furthermore, it is neither visible, nor coloured, nor large, nor thick, nor heavy: which is equivalent to saying that it is more than a number.

As regards Two, it is altogether different. If two did not exist, one would be the only number possible. Now, where all is one, all is like; where all is like, there is no discordance; where there is no discordance, there is perfection: it is two, therefore, which sets all things at variance. Therein is the evil principle, therein is Satan. Of all our numerical symbols, two has therefore the most sinister form, the most acute angle.

At the same time, without two there could be no composition, no relations, no harmony. It is the element of every composite thing so long as it remains composite. Two is the symbol and the instrument of all generation. There were two cherubim on the ark, and birds have two wings, whence two is the principle of elevation.

The number Three contains the expression of harmony and that of composition; it is perfect harmony. The

reason is self-evident; it is a composite number which is divisible only by one. The simplest of all figures results from three points placed at equal distances. This threefold figure is one notwithstanding, like perfect harmony. And in the oriental wisdom, is not Trimourti the combination of three powers—Brahma, who creates; Vishnou, who preserves; and Routren, who destroys? Do you not recognise the number three in Trimourti? This it is which produces Brahma, the unique principle.

In terrestrial things, is not thirty-three, that is, the number represented by two threes, that of the age of perfection in man? And were not three souls formerly acknowledged in man, the masterwork of Brahma?

Three is the principle of perfection: it is the number of the composite brought back to unity, of that which is exalted by aggregation and fulfilled by unity. Three is the mysterious number of the first order, whence there are three kingdoms in terrestrial things, and three accidents—formation, life, disintegration—for every organic composite.

Four has a striking analogy with the body, because the body has four faculties. It includes also all the sacredness of the oath. How is this? I have no idea, but seeing that a master has affirmed it, no doubt his disciples will explain.

Five is protected by Venus, because she presides over marriage, and there is something of an indefinable felicity in the form of this number. This is why we have five fingers and five senses. Other reasons should not be required.

I know nothing as to the number Six, except that the cube has six facets. The rest impresses me as unworthy of the sublime things which I have collected concerning the other numbers.

Seven, however, is of palmary importance. It represents all creatures, and this is rendered more interesting by the fact that all creatures belong to us, a right divine delegated from of old and proved by bridle and fillet, in spite of all that may be advanced on occasion by bears, lions and serpents. This empire was somehow spared to us at the fall; two sevens must, however, be placed together; one destroys the other: for baptism being also in it, seventy-seven signifies the abolition of all sins by baptism, as St. Augustine demonstrated to the academies of Africa.

In Seven there will be recognised at once the union of two perfect numbers, of two principles of perfection, a union to some extent consummated and consolidated by that sublime unity which sets upon it the seal of harmony, and causes seven to be six only. It is therefore the mysterious number of the second order, or, if preferred, the principle of all the highly complex numbers. This is demonstrated by the various aspects of the moon, and hence the seventh day was chosen as that of rest. Hence religious festivals have sanctified this number in the eyes of the people. Hence also comes the notion of septenary cycles, joined to that of the great cataclysm. "God has impressed everywhere in the universe the sacred character of the number seven," says Joachites. In the starry heaven, everything has been created thereby. All ancient mysticism is full of this number, which is the most mysterious of the apocalyptic series, as of those of the Mithraic cultus and of the mysteries of initiation. Seven stars of the resplendent genius, seven Gâhanbards, seven Amschaspands or angels of Ormuz. The Jews have their week of years, and the square of seven was the true number of their jubilee period. It has also been remarked that, at least as regards our own planet and even our solar system, the number seven is more especially indicated by natural phenomena. Seven

spheres of the first order, seven metals, seven odours, seven flavours, seven rays of light, seven tones, seven simple articulations of the human voice.

Seven years make up a week of life, and forty-nine comprise the grand week. The seven-month child has a chance of existence; he sees after fourteen days; has teeth at seven months old, and at seven years obtains his second teeth, when he also begins to distinguish between good and evil. He can reproduce his species at the age of fourteen years, and at twenty-one attains a kind of maturity, for which reason, political and legal majority has been fixed at that period. The age of twenty-eight is the epoch of a great change in human affections and in the aspects of life. At thirty-five youth may be said to end. At forty-two our faculties enter on the downward grade. At forty-nine the longest life has reached the half-way house as regards the extreme of duration, and is in the autumn of the senses: the first furrows —physical and moral—are beginning to appear. At fifty-six there are the first signs of old age. Sixty-three is the earliest epoch of natural death—an expression to which I remember that you object; let us therefore substitute necessary death, or death brought on by general causes, consequent on the decline of life. I mean to say that if death takes place from old age at seventy-four or at eighty-eight, then it occurs through age only at sixty-three, or that this is the first period when life finishes through complaints originating in decrepitude. Many famous persons have died at seventy, eighty-four, ninety-eight and a hundred and four (or a hundred and five) years. Aristotle, Abelard, Heloise, Luther, Constantine, Schah-Abbas, Nostrodamus, and Mahomet died at sixty-three; and Cleopatra realised the necessity of waiting for twenty-eight days before following Antony to the grave.

If we may trust the Mongolian tribes and the inhabitants

of Central Africa, Nine is the most harmonic of numbers; it is the square of the only number which is indivisible except by unity; it is the principle of indirect productions; it is mystery multiplied by mystery. We may learn in the Zend-Avesta how much this number was venerated throughout one portion of the East. In Georgia and Iran, everything is arranged in accordance with the number nine; the Avares and Chinese are particularly attached to it. The Syrian Mussulmans enumerate ninety-nine attributes of Divinity, while eighteen worlds, nine good and nine evil, are known to the Eastern part of India.

The sign which represents this number has, however, its tail downward, like the comet which disseminates monsters, and nine is the emblem of every fatal vicissitude; in Switzerland especially the destructive north-wind lasts nine days. Eighty-one, or nine multiplied by itself, is the number of the grand climacteric; all men who love order should die at this age, and in this respect Dionysius of Heraclea set a great example to the world.

I must acknowledge that eighteen years is looked upon as a very fascinating age, and yet it is destruction multiplied by the evil principle, but as to this an interpretation is possible. It will be observed that in eighteen years there are two hundred and sixteen months, a complex and baleful number, giving, in the first place, eighty-one multiplied by two, which is frightful. In the fifty-four months remaining over there will be found an oath and Venus. Four and five are strongly suggestive of marriage, a condition which is highly attractive at eighteen; is good for nothing to either sex at forty-four or forty-five years; at eighty-one seldom fails to be ridiculous, and at every age can, even by its delights themselves, impair, desolate and degrade human nature in conformity with the horrors attaching to the worship of the number fiv-

What is worse than to empoison life by the enjoyment of five? Now at eighteen years these dangers are in full force; there is therefore no age more fatal. This fact could only be discovered by numbers, and these are consequently the basis of morality.

Should you observe any semblance of uncertainty in all this, be careful to cast away doubt and to redouble faith. That which now follows rests on the authority of one who was the greatest light of the early Christian centuries. Ten is justice and beatitude resulting from the creature who is seven and the Trinity which is three. Eleven signifies sin, because it oversteps ten, which is justice. You attain here the highest point of the sublime, and silence henceforth must be imposed; Saint Augustine could himself go no farther.

Had I paper left, I could prove to you the existence of the philosophical stone; that the many learned and famous persons who believed in it could not have been madmen; that it is not in itself more astonishing than the compass, nor more inconceivable than the production of an oak from the acorn which you have placed in the ground; but whether it is or ought to be so, let the university fledglings continue to decide that Stahl, Bekker, Paracelsus merited an asylum.

Visit your jasmines; leave me my doubts and demonstrations. I need a touch of delirium, so that at least I can laugh at myself; there is a certain tranquillity, a pleasure, bizarre if you will, in considering that all is a dream. It distracts from many other dreams that are more serious, and it diminishes those of our unrest.

You do not wish us to be led by imagination, because it takes us astray; but where the individual enjoyment of thought is alone concerned, may not our present destination be itself in the domain of the astray? All men have

dreamed, and all have felt the need of dreaming; while the evil genius brings them into life, the good genius takes them into sleep and dream.

LETTER XLVIII

MÉTERVILLE, *September* 1 (VI).

Notwithstanding the indifference amidst which we protract our years, the sky upon a cloudless night is unveiled to us with the vastness of all its worlds, not a phantasmagoria of imagination, but there over our heads. And the stars' distance shall seem more than the sky's distance, and those suns shall show forth worlds wherein beings diverse from ourselves are born and feel and die.

Near me, erect and firm, is the trunk of a young fir-tree; up in the air it soars, having apparently neither life nor motion; yet it subsists, and it would know if it were conscious of itself that its secret and life are within it. Imperceptibly it grows, the same by night and day, the same beneath the cold snow and under the summer sun. Motionless amidst all these worlds, yet it revolves with the earth. The grasshopper is astir while man is sleeping; the insect will perish, the fir-tree fall, and the worlds will change. Where then will our books be; our renown, our fears, our caution; the house that we are scheming to build; the wheat that the hail has spared? For what future time are you saving? On what age is your hope fixed? Yet a revolution of a star, yet one hour of its span, and all which is you shall cease; all shall be lost which is you—more annihilated, more impossible than if it had never been. He will be dead whose misfortunes now overwhelm you; she who is so beautiful will have perished; the son who is to survive you will be no more.

You have multiplied the implements of the arts; the moon seems close to your telescopes; you search it for some traces of activity, but find none therein; once activity was there, but now the moon is dead. And this globe on which you stand to-day shall be as dead as that. Why do you pause? You have a brief to draw up for your lawsuit, an ode to finish which is to be declaimed to-morrow evening. Intelligence of the worlds! How vain are the cares of man! What ridiculous anxieties for the episodes of an hour! What insensate struggles to set in order the circumstances of a life which a breath of time will scatter! To behold, to enjoy what passes, to imagine, to submit—of such should be all our being. But to set in order, to establish, to know, to possess—what madness!

He, notwithstanding, who refuses to be troubled over uncertain days will fail to attain the repose in which man is left to himself, or the relaxation which offers distraction amidst the disgusts that are preferred in place of tranquil life; he will miss, when he needs it, the cup of wine or coffee by which mortal weariness is averted for a moment. Sequence and order will be also missing from what he is constrained to perform, and there will be no security for those who belong to him. Because he has girdled the world in the lofty flight of his thoughts, it will come to pass that his genius, quenched in languor, will be denied henceforth its flight; having sought for too many truths in the outward nature, his thought will no longer be permitted to maintain itself in the nature that is within.

People discourse only of the repression of the passions and of the strength to do what is right, but, in the midst of so much that is impenetrable, make plain to us that which is right! For myself, I do not know it, and I make bold to suspect that there are many others in the same case. All the manufacturers of sects have pretended to expound

duty and conduct it to a demonstration, but their supernatural proofs have left it in deeper doubt. Possibly an assured knowledge and a certain end are neither in accordance with our nature nor with our needs. We must exercise our will all the same. It is a mournful necessity, as it is also an unbearable anxiety, this compulsory possession of a will, when we know not as what to direct it.

I ground myself often on the idea that the fortuitous course of events, and the immediate results of our intentions, must be matters of appearance only, that every human action is necessary, and determined by the irresistible march of the universality of things. It has been given me, as I think, to discern this truth; as soon, however, as I lose sight of general considerations, I grow anxious and speculate like the rest. At other times I exert myself to sift all this, to ascertain if there be a true foundation to my will, and if it be possible that my conceptions connect with some determinate plan. You may rest assured that in this unfathomable gloom all escapes me, not excepting probabilities themselves. I become fatigued speedily. I am disheartened, and cease to see anything clearly, unless it be the unavoidable ambiguity of all that men long to know.

Those comprehensive ideas which render man so arrogant and so greedy of dominion, of hopes, of duration, are they vaster than the heavens mirrored on the surface of a tiny pool of rain, which evaporates in the first wind? The image of a portion of the universe is received by the metal which art has polished, and we receive it likewise. The metal has not, however, the consciousness of the contact, and in this consciousness there is a quality of the marvellous which we are pleased to term divine. But does not the dog that follows us possess a conscio of the forests, the hunters, and the gun, of which h receives the impression and reflects the images?

theless, after having chased so many hares, licked the hands of so many masters and unearthed so many moles, he dies; you surrender him to the ravens whose instinct discerns the effluvium of carcases; and you confess that such consciousness is his no longer.

Those conceptions which, by their vastness, astonish our weakness and fill our narrow hearts with ecstasy are possibly of less importance for Nature than are the most imperfect of mirrors for human industry, and man, notwithstanding, breaks these without remorse. To have only an accidental existence is confessedly a frightful thing for our hungry souls; to look for reunion with the principle of imperishable order is confessedly sublime; but let us affirm nothing beyond.

The man who toils to raise himself may be compared to those shadows of the evening which lengthen for a single hour, becoming more vast than their substances, and seeming to grow as they expand; yet one moment dissipates them.

And I also, moments of forgetfulness are mine, moments of strength and grandeur; longings unmeasured are mine —*sepulchri immemor!* But I pause before the monuments of effaced generations; I see the pebble which is subject to the hand of man, and yet will survive him by a hundred centuries. I relinquish anxieties for things which pass away, and those thoughts of a present which is even now escaping us. Astonished, I pause, listening to what still subsists, and striving to distinguish that which will go on subsisting. In the movement of the forests, in the surge of the pine-trees, I seek some accents of the eternal language.

Ah, Living Force! Eternal Spirit of the world! If man is destined to survive, I marvel at thy work, but I am crushed by it if he is fated to end.

LETTER XLIX

MÉTERVILLE, *September* 14 (VI).

And so because I am not altogether horrified at your doctrines, I must be on the way to revere them! The very contrary, as I think, obtains. But I suspect that you have a scheme for my conversion.

What interest do you suppose that I can have in refusing to admit your religious opinions? And if interest, or partiality, or passion, or even estrangement, do not go into the scale against them, on what ground will they win entrance into a head which knows no systems, or into a heart wherein remorse will never prepare a place for them?

It is affirmed that the self-interest of the passions hinders men from embracing Christianity. I must answer frankly that this is a very pitiful argument. I am talking to you now like an opponent: we are, so to speak, in a state of warfare, for you have set eyes on a portion of my liberty. If you impeach non-believers on the ground that they are devoid of pure conscience, I must accuse the devotees of being deficient in sincere zeal. The result of all this will be vain words, a babble which is repeated everywhere, *ad nauseam*, and by which nothing will ever be proved.

Suppose, in my turn, I were to tell you that it is only the wicked who are Christians, since it is they only who are in need of nightmares to restrain them from theft, murder and treachery. Certain Christians, whose pietist disposition and fantastic belief have deranged both heart and mind, find themselves suspended continually between the desire of crime and the terror of the devil.

According to the vulgar method of judging others by

one's self, they are immediately alarmed upon encountering a man who does not cross himself. He is not with us, they exclaim, he is against us. He does not share our fears, and therefore he fears nothing; therefore also he is capable of everything. He does not put his hands together, and it is because he is hiding them; assuredly there is a stiletto in one, and in the other he carries poison.

I can bear no animosity towards these good creatures: how should they believe that the right order is sufficient by itself? There is chaos in their notions. Others amongst them will say to me: Mark all that I have suffered; whence would my strength have been drawn if I had not received it from on high? My friend, others have suffered still more and have received nothing from above. There is also this difference, that they have made less noise about it, and yet do not exalt themselves greatly on that account. We go on enduring much as we go on walking. Which is the man who can accomplish twenty thousand leagues? He who does one league daily and lives for sixty years. Each morning brings with it renewed powers, and hope that is quenched leaves still a vague hope.

It will be argued that laws are evidently inadequate. Let us grant it. I can point out creatures that are stronger than ourselves, who are seldom or never controlled, and abide in the midst of us not only devoid of any religious curb, but even in the absence of laws. Their wants are often very indifferently satisfied; that which is denied them is close at hand, yet they make no attempt to snatch at it; and thirty-nine out of forty will die without having done any harm, whilst you extol the effects of grace, if as much can be said for three out of four amongst you Christians. Where are these wise ones, these prodigies?—you exclaim. Softly, softly! They are in no sense philosophers, in no sense miraculous beings, any more than they are Christians. They

are simply unmuzzled, unruled and uncatechised mastiffs, liable to be met with at any moment, and no one requires that their forbidding jowl should be signed with the cross to reassure him. You will say that I jest, and in all good faith how can you expect that I should do otherwise?

All religions anathematise one another, because there is not one of them which bears the seal of divinity. I know, of course, that you claim it for your own, but the rest of the earth does not recognise it, since it is all too well concealed. Now, I am like the rest of the earth, very bad at discerning the invisible.

I do not say that the Christian religion is evil, but to accept it one must believe that it is divine, and this is not easy. As a human achievement it may be exceedingly beautiful, but it is unthinkable that a religion should be human, however earthly are its ministers.

As for wisdom, that is human assuredly; it attempts not to soar into the clouds only to crumble down into ruins; it may do less to uplift the mind, but it does not expose it to the neglect of all duties by rendering its own laws contemptible as soon as they are unmasked; in no sense does it forbid free inquiry, and in no way does it shrink from objections. The pretext is wanting for its misconstruction; the depravity of the heart alone withstands it; and if human wisdom were the basis of our moral institutions, its empire would be very nearly universal, because no one could hold aloof from its laws without making, by that very fact, a formal confession of turpitude. You interpose by affirming that you do not admit this, that you disapprove of wisdom, and herein it must be confessed that you are logical.

I set aside those partisans who parade a pretence of good faith, and even go so far as to multiply friends to spread the fact that they have converted them. I come back

to you who are strongly and entirely convinced, and would impart to me a repose which I shall assuredly never know.

I do not approve of intolerance any more than of bias towards religion. I am scarcely more in sympathy with its declared adversaries than with its fanatical zealots. Nor do I affirm that in some countries we should rashly undeceive a people which is truly believing, provided that they have outgrown the period of holy wars and are no longer in the fever of conversion. But when a cultus has become disenchanted, the pretence of restoring its attractions is, in my opinion, ridiculous; when the ark is decaying, when the Levites, in mourning and dismay round its ruins, will yet persist in crying out to me: "Keep back, your profane breath will stain them," I am then compelled to examine and ascertain whether they are speaking seriously. Seriously? Why, certainly, you exclaim; and the Church which will never perish is on the point of restoring to the faith of the nations that ancient fervour, the return of which to you seems altogether chimerical. . . . I should not regret the experiment, nor by any means deny its success; on the contrary, I could even wish for it: it would at least be a curious fact.

Since I end invariably by addressing myself to others, it is time to close a letter which is evidently not intended for you. We shall continue to cherish our respective opinions on these points, and to understand each other perfectly on all others. Superstitious manias and the excesses of zeal exist no more for a truly good man than do the exaggerated dangers of that which some term atheism so ridiculously. I have no wish for you to renounce your belief, but it might not be unserviceable to cease from regarding it as indispensable to the heart of man, because, to be logical and yet to pretend that there is no morality apart from religion, we must rekindle the tar-barrels.

LETTER L

LYONS, *June* 22 (*Seventh Year*).

As fashion has ceased to possess that local uniformity which constituted it for so many persons a necessary rule of life, almost a law of Nature, and as women are free to choose a mode to their liking, so also every man can select that which best pleases him.

Persons who are nearing the period when there is a sense of gratification in blaming anything that has changed, consider it a mark of bad taste that the hair is no longer dressed on the forehead, the back-hair padded and raised up, the lower limbs isolated in a hoop of exaggerated proportions, and the feet encased in shoes with very high heels. Doubtless these venerable usages maintained a high standard of morals, but since women have so far perverted their taste as to imitate the only nation which ever possessed taste, they have ceased to be more broad than tall, and having by degrees abandoned an armouring of steel and whale-bone, they have so far violated Nature that they can eat and breathe in their clothes.

I suppose that an improved toilet offends those who are partisans of the old-time stiffness, the mode of the Goths; yet I cannot excuse them for ascribing such ridiculous importance to changes which were inevitable.

Let me know if you have come across any new explanation of all that we remarked in the past concerning the declared enemies of prevailing morals. They are almost invariably men who are themselves devoid of morals. If there are others who are disposed to blame, it is at least without that warmth which I cannot help regarding as suspicious.

It will not surprise any one, that men who have trifled with morals are zealous in later life for their maintenance,

that in women especially they insist on them with great severity, and that after devoting their prime to the attempt to rob females of their morals, they despise the whole sex because a few of that sex have had the misfortune not to despise them. Possibly they are themselves unaware of this little hypocrisy. To a greater extent, and far more commonly, it results from the depravity of their own tastes, their own habitual excesses, and their secret desire to encounter a serious resistance, so that their vanity may be gratified by overcoming it. It is a result of the idea that others have profited by the same weaknesses, and of the fear that some may prove wanting towards them, as they have made others wanting in favour of themselves.

When, in the course of time, they have ceased to be interested personally in the violation of all rights, the interest of their passions, which has ever been their only law, begins to warn them that the same rights will be violated in their respect. They have contributed to the destruction of the rigid manners which once embarrassed them, and now cry out against the laxity which has begun to make them anxious. They preach wholly in vain; when things that are good in themselves are commended by this kind of men, they fall into contempt rather than receive a new sanction.

Some of them, but no less vainly, will argue that if they now condemn licentiousness it is because they have come to recognise its dangers. The motive may be occasionally sincere, but it will not be accepted, because it is notoriously true that in most cases the man who has acted unjustly when it suited him during the life of the passions, adopts justice subsequently only through personal motives, and such justice, more shameful even than his licence, is despised more because it is less frank.

But that young people should take offence at first sight

and unpremeditatedly about things which in their nature are pleasant to the senses, and of which they cannot naturally disapprove until after reflection—that, in my opinion, is the greatest evidence of real depravity. I am astonished that sensible persons should look on it as the final warning of Nature in revolt, testifying to her misconstrued laws in the inmost depth of the heart. They say that corruption cannot exceed certain limits, and this reassures and consoles them.

The contrary seems to me nearer the truth, and I should like to have your opinion as to whether I am alone in this view. I am not at all sure where the truth actually lies, and will admit that many appearances are against me.

My way of looking at it cannot well be other than the result only of personal experience. I do not study or make systematic observations, for which I have no faculty. I reflect as chance may permit, and I recall what I have myself felt. When this leads me to examine what is outside my own knowledge, I look for my data in the place of my greatest certitude, that is to say, in myself, and as such data are free from assumption or paradox, they help me to discover not a little as regards what is analogous or opposed to them. I am aware that there are inconveniences for vulgar minds in anything which affects the folly of their ideas, the coarseness of their sensations, and an insipid conceit misusing everything which does not threaten to rebuff them. I do not say that women who are too free in their dress are altogether exempt from blame; those who call for no greater condemnation forget at least that they dwell amidst the crowd, and such forgetfulness is imprudence. They are not, however, in question: I am concerned with the sensation which the lightness of their drapery may occasion in men of different dispositions. I am investigating why it is that men who allow themselves every kind of licence, who, far from respecting that

which they term modesty, make it plain even by their conversation, that they are unacquainted with the mere rules of good taste; who make no examination of their conduct, and yield to the passing fancy of the moment; should take it into their heads to discover indecency where I can discern none, and where reflection itself could reprove only a temporary unseemliness. How is it that they trace it in things which, taken by themselves and in their natural place, seem to others quite simple, and might even prove pleasing to some who admire true modesty and not the hypocrisy or superstition of modesty.

It is a fatal mistake to set such great importance on words and on the external part of things. To be acquainted with these mere phantoms even by some legitimate habit is enough to dissuade one from confusing them with the things themselves.

When a devotee, who, at sixteen years old, would not suffer herself to be embraced in the course of some social pastime; who at the age of twenty-two, on the occasion of her marriage, shrank with horror from the nuptial night, receives her director in her arms at the age of twenty-four, I do not think that there has been hypocrisy and nothing else on her part. I am struck rather by the folly of the precepts which have been instilled into her. She may be guilty of bad faith, more especially as a false morality invariably debases the frankness of the soul, and long constraint prompts to disguise and duplicity. But if this failing have a place in her heart, there is far more of foolishness in her head. Her mind has been falsified and held unceasingly in bondage to chimerical duties, without fostering therein the smallest sentiment of the real duties. Instead of making plain to her the true end of things, she has been accustomed to refer everything to an imaginary end. Exact relations are no longer perceived, proportions become

arbitrary; causes and effects count for nothing; and it is impossible to discover the true harmony of things. That there may be a reason for good and evil does not even occur to her, outside the rule that has been imposed on her, and in connections other than those obscure antagonisms between her most secret habits and the impenetrable will of the intelligences who wish invariably the opposite of man.

She has been counselled to close her eyes and then go straight forward, because that is the way of happiness and of glory, and the only way thereto; loss, terror, the abyss, eternal damnation, fill all the rest of space. So she proceeds blindly, and, following an oblique line, goes wandering astray. It is inevitably so. Walk with closed eyes in a space that is open on all sides, and once you have lost your original direction you will never recover it, while frequently you will not know that you have lost it. Hence, if she does not wake up to her error, she goes astray more and more, and loses herself in full confidence. If, however, she becomes conscious of her mistake, she is disturbed and gives herself up for lost; knowing no degrees in evil, she concludes that once her early innocence is sullied, that which she alone esteemed and knows not how to regain, she has nothing further to lose.

Simple-minded girls have not infrequently conducted themselves with the strictest prudence, albeit in complete ignorance, and have held a kiss in horror like a sacrilege; but if a kiss be obtained from them, they think that they have no longer anything left to defend, and yield themselves because they believe that they have already yielded. They have never been instructed in the lesser or greater consequences of different things. Their education has sought to preserve them solely from the first false step, as if it were certain that this would never be taken, or that their protectors would be ever at their side to restrain them after it.

The devotee whom I have in my mind did not avoid imprudences, but stood in dread of a phantom. It follows naturally that when the altar gave her licence to sleep with her husband, she would struggle with him for the first few days, but not so long after would sleep with another who conversed with her on salvation and the mortification of the flesh. When her hand was kissed she was alarmed, but it was merely by instinct; accustomed to this, she is alarmed no longer at being enjoyed. Her ambition was to be ranked among the virgins in heaven, but now she is a virgin no longer, and seeing that this is past remedy, what does the rest matter? She was dedicated altogether to a heavenly spouse, after the example of the Blessed Virgin. Now she is no longer her follower, no longer the heavenly bride; a man has possessed her; should another man also possess her, can it matter so much? As to the rights of a husband, they make but little impression on her; having never reflected upon such worldly matters, she may well be in ignorance of their existence; it is at least quite certain that they do not exercise an influence, because she does not realise the reason of them.

She has indeed received the command to be faithful, but the effect of this passes away, because it belongs to an order of things on which her mind has not dwelt, on which she would blush to commune even with herself. Once she has slept with a man, her greatest embarrassment is over, and should it happen that, in the absence of her husband, a man more holy than he has the skill to soothe her scruples in a moment of desire or of need, she will yield as she yielded at her marriage; she will experience less terror in enjoyment than was the case with her first pleasures, because such enjoyment is no longer a novelty or one which causes a great alteration in her state of life. As she is not

disturbed about material prudence, and would be shocked at taking precautions in sin, at circumspection and reflection over an act which she permits to her senses, but the stain of which her soul would repel, it may further happen that she will conceive, and will often be in doubt or in ignorance as to whether her husband is the father of the child for which she makes him responsible. Even if she is certain on the point, she will prefer to leave him in error, provided that she does not tell a lie, rather than expose him to falling into a rage and thus offending Heaven, or, on the other hand, expose herself to speak ill of her neighbour by naming her seducer.

It is very true that religion, better understood, would not permit such conduct, nor am I speaking against any religion. Morality, properly conceived by all, would make men truly just, and therefore truly happy and truly good. Religion, which is morality less reasoned, less demonstrated, less convinced by the direct reasons of things, but sustained by marvels and strengthened and necessitated by a divine sanction — religion, well understood, would make men perfectly pure. If I speak of a devotee, it is because moral error is nowhere so great or so divorced from the true needs of the human heart as in the errors of the devout. I admire religion as it ought to be; as a great achievement I admire it; even in rebellion against religions, I do not wish that their beauties should be denied, or the good that they have designed to do misconstrued and disavowed. Those who act thus are in the wrong; is a good that is accomplished less good because it has not been performed in accordance with their predilections? Let them cast about for the means to do better with less, but acknowledge the good that has been performed; for, after all has been said, much has been accomplished by religion. Such are a few words from my profession

of faith; we had, I think, regarded ourselves as further divided herein.

If you would have me absolutely return to my first subject by a transition according to the rules, you would place me in an extremely difficult position. But although my letters bear too much resemblance to treatises—though I write to you like a recluse talking with his friend, just as he dreams by himself—I give you warning that it is my intention to claim all epistolary freedom when it suits me to take advantage of it.

Those men whose thoughtless or ill-chosen enjoyments have perverted their affections and brutalised their senses, to my mind perceive only in physical love the grossness of their own proclivities; they have lost the delicious presentiment of pleasure. The nude offends them because the interval between the sensation which it awakes in them and the coarse appetite to which all their enjoyment is reduced no longer exists for them. That appetite, when awakened within them, would still please them, by recalling at least those obscure pleasures which are sought for by senses that are lascivious rather than inflamed; but not having preserved true modesty, they have let disgust combine with their enjoyments. As, even in the abandonment of the senses they have not known how to distinguish the becoming from the unbecoming, they have had recourse to those females who corrupt morals by losing manners, and who are contemptible, not precisely because they minister to pleasure but because they denaturalise and destroy it through substituting licence for freedom. As such men have allowed all the enchanting illusions to escape by permitting things that are repugnant to delicate senses, and by confounding things of an altogether different order; as their imprudences have been visited by fatal and repulsive consequences, they have lost the frankness of pleasure with

the uncertainties of desire. Their imagination is henceforth enkindled only by habit; their sensations, more indecent than greedy; their ideas, more gross than voluptuous; their disdain of women—full proof of the contempt which they have themselves deserved—all these recall the odious and perhaps dangerous part of love. Its primitive charm, its grace which, for pure souls, is so powerful, all that is amiable and felicitous exists no more for them. They have reached such a pass that they must have either wantons to sport with unrestrained, and with their habitual disdain, or women of excessive modesty who can still impose on them when no delicacy longer checks them, and who, not being women from their standpoint, do not fill them with the importunate sense of that which they have lost.

Is it not obvious that if a touch of freedom in dress displeases such people, it is because their debased imagination can be moved only by something in the way of a surprise? The explanation of their ill-humour is to be sought in their vexation at an incapacity for feeling on ordinary and simple occasions. They have no eyes for any things but those which, concealed previously, are suddenly discovered, as the man who is almost blind is made aware of the presence of light only by an abrupt transition from darkness to a strong glare.

Any one who possesses the gift of insight upon questions of morality will be disposed to consider that the really contemptible woman is she who is scrupulous and severe in her external conduct, while she is secretly scheming, through many days of reflection, to impose on a husband whose honour or satisfaction is staked on her exclusive possession. I look upon a courtesan who preserves a certain dignity, something of free choice, and especially a spice of loyalty, in spite of her over-free manners, as superior to such a

person, who laughs with her lover and ridicules her betrayed husband.

Were men only sincere in spite of their personal interests, their contrarieties and their vices, the earth might yet be beautiful!

Were the morality which is preached to them true, consequent and free from exaggeration; did it show them the grounds of duty while preserving just proportions; if it tended only to their true end, each individual nation would have only to keep in check a handful of people whose ill-balanced brains fail to recognise what is just. They could be dealt with in much the same way as imbeciles and madmen, and they would not prove to be numerous, for there are in reality few men who are impervious to reason, though there are many who know scarcely where to look for the truth amidst the multitude of public errors which affect to bear its name. Even when they meet with it, it is almost past recognition on account of the awkward, repellent and even false light in which it is presented.

Good that is useless, evil that is imaginary, virtues that are chimerical, these and all incertitudes absorb our time, our talents and our wills, as the multitude of superfluous or contradictory toils and cares hinder, in a flourishing country, the pursuit of those which would be useful and could boast of an invariable object.

When the heart has ceased to possess true principles there is usually excessive punctiliousness over public appearances and the duties of opinion; such misplaced severity is an unsuspected witness to interior reproaches. "By reflecting," says Rousseau, "on the folly of our maxims, which never fail to sacrifice true honesty to decency, I have come to understand why language is more chaste in proportion to the greater corruption of the heart, and why refined manners

are more exact in proportion as those who possess them are the more dishonest."

To have enjoyed little may be possibly an advantage; it is very difficult for pleasures to be repeated so frequently, and yet to be without admixture and without satiety. When alloyed, or when merely weakened by habit which dispels illusions, they no longer occasion the surprise which gives warning of a felicity that previously was either discredited or unexpected; they no longer take the imagination of man beyond what he has conceived; they no longer elevate by a progression, the last term of which has become too familiar; hope disheartened abandons him to the painful sentiment of a pleasure which eludes, and to that other sentiment of revulsion which comes often to freeze pleasure. We are reminded also too often that there is nothing beyond, and the happiness once so dwelt upon, so desired, possessed so fully is now but the amusement of an hour and the pastime of indifference. The exhausted, or at least satiated, senses are no longer kindled by a first emotion; they are dazzled no longer in the presence of a woman; her charms unveiled no longer fill them with a universal tremor; the alluring expression of her desires imparts no longer an unexpected felicity to the man whom she loves. He is familiar with the enjoyment which he obtains; he can conceive its limits; the supernatural element has passed out of his delight; she whom he possesses is no longer more than woman, while he has himself lost all, for he can only love henceforth with the capacities of a man.

It is indeed time that I should finish; the day is breaking. If you returned yesterday to Chessel, you will now be visiting your fruit-trees. As for me, who have no such occupation and am very little influenced by a beautiful morning, since

I do not know how to employ the day which follows it, I shall betake myself to rest. When the dawn comes I am rather content than otherwise that I have still my whole night to pass, and can thus make an easy transition to the afternoon, about which I trouble very little.

LETTER LI

PARIS, *September* 2 (VII).

A certain Saint-Felix, who was formerly a hermit at Franchart in the forest of Fontainebleau, is said to lie buried in the vicinity of that monastery, under what is known as the weeping rock, a vast boulder of freestone, with an approximate cubical dimension of an ordinary room. In accordance with the variations of the seasons, water flows out copiously or distils drop by drop from this boulder and falls upon a smooth concave stone, hollowed by the imperceptible but incessant work of the element, to which special qualities are ascribed. Administered for the space of nine days, it proves a salve for the eyes of small children. Those who are suffering from an affection of these organs, or may be troubled by them one of these days, are consequently brought to this weeping rock, and at the end of the novena many go away cured.

I can scarcely say why I am mentioning, on this particular day, a place which I have forgotten so long, but I am in dejection, and therefore write. I contrive to dispense with you in my more cheerful moods, but I have recourse to you in dark moments like this. I know many people who would take such a confession amiss, which is, however, their own concern, for assuredly they will have small cause to complain of me, as I am quite unlikely to have recourse to them in the midst of my dejection. For the rest, my window has

been open all night, and now it is morning—tranquil, mild and clouded. I think, after all, that I can guess why I have remembered this memorial of a melancholic religion amidst the mists and the rumours of the forest. The heart of man, so active and yet so perishable, finds a kind of perpetuity, in that communication of popular feelings by which they are propagated, increased and eternalised, so to speak. A boorish, unkempt, unintelligent hermit, not impossibly a rogue, and in any case useless to the world, summons all generations to his tomb. By assuming to devote himself to nothingness on this earth, he becomes thereon the recipient of an immortal veneration. He says, in effect, to men: I renounce all that is claimed by your desires, I am unworthy to be included among you. And this abnegation uplifts him to the altar, between the Supreme Power and all the aspirations of humanity.

He who achieves greatness is expected by the crowd either to take his departure amidst some great tumult, or, alternatively, under some hypocritical subterfuge; to proceed by the way of their immolation or their deception, by insulting their misfortune or their credulity. The man who destroys them is august, he who brutalises them is accounted venerable. To me all this is indifferent. I confess that I am strongly inclined to set the opinion of the sages before that of the people. The possession of the esteem of my friends and the general goodwill I should account a necessity, but a great reputation would be merely an amusement; I might own to a little caprice in that direction, but not assuredly to any passion. What influence on the felicity of my days can possibly reside in a renown which is next to nothing while I live, though it may be increased after my death? It is the arrogance of the living which pronounces with so much respect the great names of the departed. I fail to distinguish any very solid advantage

in being subservient for a thousand years to the passions of divers parties and all the caprices of opinion. It is enough for me if no true man can accuse my memory; all else is vanity. Chance decides it but too often, and still more frequently the means displease me. I would be neither Charles XII. nor Pacôme. To seek after glory and to fail is the height of humiliation; to deserve and to lose it is perhaps mournful; to attain it is not the first end of man.

Tell me whether the greatest names are those of just men. When it is possible for us to perform good actions, let us do so for their own sake, and if we are cut off by our state of life from the opportunity of the greater achievements, do not let us forego those small things which find no recompense in glory. Let us leave the incertitudes and rest satisfied with goodness in obscurity. Plenty of men who seek renown for its own sake will provide that motive power which may be needed in great states; for ourselves let us aim only at the conduct which should insure glory, and be indifferent to the fantasies of destiny which at times accord it to happiness, refuse it at times to heroism, and dispense it so rarely to purity of intention.

For some days past I have experienced a profound regret for simple things. I grow weary already at Paris, not that it is absolutely distasteful, but I could never be satisfied in places which I am merely passing through. This is also the season which never fails to remind me of all the sweetness which might be met with in domestic life, if two friends, at the head of two small and united families, possessed two neighbouring homes in the heart of the green country, among woods, not over far from a town, yet sufficiently isolated from its influence. The morning would be consecrated to serious pursuits and the evening to those trifles which are as interesting as important occupations, when the latter are not too anxious. I desire no longer a life of

complete obscurity, forgotten in the midst of the mountains; things so simple have ceased to content me. Since that which is little is denied me, I wish for that which is more. The persistent reluctance of my destiny has increased my wants. I sought that simplicity in which the heart of man reposes; now I seek that only in which his mind can also play a part. I would not merely enjoy peace, but have the satisfaction of settling its terms. Where it reigns universally, its acquisition would be too easy; finding everything that is needful to the wants of the sage, I should not have the wherewithal to fill the hours of a restless spirit. Hence I begin to scheme, to set eyes on the future, to think of a later age: I might know even the passion for life!

I wonder whether you pay proper attention to those nothings which interweave and weld together all the members of a household and the friends connected therewith; to those small details which cease to be small from the moment that we become attached to any of them, are concerned about them and combine in the attempt to attain them. During the first dry days after winter, when the sun warms the grass and all are seated upon it, or when the women-folk sing in some shadowy corner, while the moon shines behind the oak trees, are we not just as well off as if we were ranged in a circle labouring with insipid phrases, or immured in a box at the opera, where the breath of two thousand humanities, more or less doubtful as regards their health or cleanliness, brings you out in moist heat all over. Remember also those entertaining and recurring pursuits of a free life! If, amidst advancing age, we seek them no longer, we can at least enter into them; we see how our wives cling to them, how our children take their delight in them. The violets found with such joy and sought with such interest; the strawberries, blackberries, hazel-nuts; the harvest of wild pears, the gathering

of fallen chestnuts, of fir-apples for the autumn hearth! Pleasant customs of a more natural life! Felicity of simple men, simplicity of favoured lands! . . . I see you all, and you chill me. You will say: I expected a pastoral exclamation! Were it better to utter one on the quaverings of an opera-singer?

You are wrong; you are too reasonable. What pleasure has it brought you? Nevertheless, I fear that all too soon I may become equally reasonable.

He has come. Who? *He.* He deserves well to be unnamed. Some day I think that he may be one of us; the shape of his head. . . . You laugh perhaps also at that, and yet the profile of his nose forms with the frontal line an angle so barely traceable! As you will; let us leave all that. But if I grant you that Lavater is an enthusiast, you must admit in return that he is not at least a dotard. I submit that to discover the character, and the gifts, above all, of men in their lineaments is a concept of genius and not a mere mockery of imagination. Examine the heads of one of the most exceptional men of modern times. You know whom I mean; when I saw his bust I guessed immediately that it was he, though I had no other guide than the likeness between what he had done and what I was looking at. Fortunately I was not alone, and this fact counts in my favour. For the rest, no researches are perhaps less susceptible of the certitude of the exact sciences. Centuries hence, the character, the tendencies, the natural gifts may be known with some accuracy, yet there will be always a liability to error as regards that part of the character which is modified by accidental circumstances without having the time or the power to alter the features sensibly. Of the works on this difficult subject, the fragments of Lavater

form, I think, the most curious. I will bring them with me. We ran over them too superficially at Méterville, and must read them afresh. I have no wish to add anything further till then, but I foresee that we shall have the pleasure of discussing the subject at some length.

LETTER LII

PARIS, *October* 9 (VII).

I am exceedingly pleased with your young friend. While I think that he will become an amiable man, I also feel sure that he will be anything but merely amiable. He is starting to-morrow for Lyons. You will remind him that he leaves two persons behind him by whom he will not be forgotten. There is no need for speculation as to the second; she is worthy to feel a mother's love for him, but is too amiable not to be herself loved after another manner, while he is too young to foresee and avoid that fascination which would win entrance under the guise of an attachment that in itself is so legitimate. I am not sorry that he is going; you are warned, and will talk to him prudently.

He justifies, as it seems to me, all the interest that you take in him; and if he were your son, I should congratulate you. Your own would be his age exactly, and he has no father spared to him! Your son and his mother died before their time. I do not scruple to refer to these things, for old sorrows may sadden but do not torture us; such bitterness, deep but still assuaged and rendered bearable by time, becomes to us as if necessary; it makes us revert to our ways of old; it is pleasing to our hearts which are so hungry for emotions, and seek, even amidst their regrets, for the infinite. Your daughter remains to you, and she,

so good, so sweet, so interesting, even as those who are no more, can fill their place for you. However great may be your losses, your misfortune is not that of the unfortunate, but solely of mankind. If those whom you have lost had been left you, your felicity would have exceeded the measure which is accorded to the happy. Yield, therefore, to their memory those recollections which they deserve so well, without dwelling too much on the sentiment of irremediable loss. Cherish peace, cherish the moderation of which nothing should wholly deprive a man, and sympathise with me who am so divided from you in this respect.

Reverting to him whom you have designated as my protégé, I might say that he is rather your own, but in truth you are more than his protector, nor do I see that his father could have done better for him. This, I think, he realises, and, what is more, with no affectation in the feeling. Although in our country sojourn we talked about you in every woodland corner and at every meadow end, he scarcely said anything of his obligations towards you; to me he had no need to speak of them, for I knew you too well; to me it would have been wrong to speak of them. I am not *one* of your friends. At the same time I know what he said to Madame T——, with whom I repeat that he was delighted, and to you she is herself most attached.

I had already advised you that we should make continual excursions in the environs of Paris. I must give you an account of these visits, so that you may receive a lengthy letter before my departure for Lyons, and may no longer be able to say that I have sent you only three lines in the course of the present year, as if I were a busy man of the world.

He grew weary of Paris very soon. Though his is the age for curiosity, it is scarcely of that kind which can be nourished for an indefinite time by a large city. He takes

less interest in a medallion than in a ruined chateau in the forest; though his manners are agreeable, he will leave the choicest gathering for covert where there is plenty of game, and, his dawning taste for art notwithstanding, he will forsake a sunrise by Vernet very willingly for a fine morning, and the most realistic landscape of Hue for the vales of Bièvre or Montmorency.

You are eager to know what has happened to us, and to hear where we have been. In the first place, nothing has happened; for the rest you shall learn, but as yet no: I have a fancy for the devious. Do you know that it is quite within possibility that some day he will love Paris though it does not attract him now? It may be possible, you reply a little coldly, and would turn to another subject, but I interrupt you, for I would have you convinced on the point.

It is not natural for a young man of sensibility to care much for a capital, seeing that a capital is not wholly natural to man. He requires a pure air, a bright sky, a boundless prospect for wandering, adventuring, hunting, in a word, for liberty. He is more attracted by the laborious tranquillity of farms and forests than by the turbulent luxury of these our prisons. Hunting tribes cannot understand how a free man can bring himself to the tillage of the earth, and for our friend, he is unable to conceive how any one can immure himself in a town, and still less how he himself may one day love what now he finds so irksome. The time will come all the same when the most lovely country scene—though it will always be lovely in his eyes—will be to him as something that is alien. His attention will be engrossed by a new order of ideas; other sensations will take naturally the place of those which now alone seem natural. When the sentiment of things factitious will be as familiar to him as that of simple things, the latter

will become insensibly effaced from his heart, not that the former will have become more attractive, but because they will move him more. The relations of man with man stimulate all our passions; they are accompanied by so much of trouble, they maintain us in such a continuous agitation, that repose after these overwhelms us, like the stillness of those naked deserts where there is neither variety nor motion, nothing to seek and nothing to hope. The occupations and the sense of rustic life animate without distressing the soul, and amidst these it is happy; the solicitudes of social life disturb, attract, exalt, and urge it on every side; in a word, they enslave it. Thus the great game hinders and fatigues humanity; his fatal inclination renders indispensable these alternatives of hope and fear which engross and consume him.

I must try and get back to my subject, but I warn you that I shall again break away without fail; I feel very well disposed for unseasonable argument.

We determined to travel on foot, a proceeding which was much to his taste, but fortunately it was not at all the inclination of his servant, and therefore to avoid a discontented attendant who would have followed our very simple arrangements with exceeding bad grace, I found some commissions for him at Paris, where we left him, to his no greater satisfaction.

I am happy here to be able to break off and inform you that valets have a love of extravagance. They share all the resources and advantages of their masters, with none of their anxieties, but they do not share them so directly as to be satiated, and thus cease to value them. How, therefore, could they do otherwise than like them? They have the secret of making them minister to their vanity. When the master's carriage is the smartest in the town, it is clear that the lacquey is a person of some importance; and assuming

him to be modestly disposed, he can scarcely forego the pleasure of being the chief lacquey in the district. I know of one who was overheard remarking that a domestic may find food for vanity in the service of a wealthy master just as a noble is honoured in serving a great king, and speaks with pride of THE KING, my master. This man must have taken lessons in the ante-chamber, and is lost.

I simply selected from the commissionaires a man whom they could answer for. He carried our small supply of linen and other necessary effects, was a convenience in many respects and a hindrance in none. He seemed perfectly contented to walk, without tiring himself, in the rear of those who fed him well and treated him still better, while we, on our part, were not sorry, in an expedition of this kind, to have a man at our disposal with whom it was possible to drop the tone of the master without being compromised. He proved very useful and very discreet as a travelling companion, but one who did not lack courage occasionally to walk abreast with us, and even impart his observations and his curiosity, without our feeling bound to silence him and send him behind us with a certain half-glance of dignity.

We set out on September 14; it was pleasant autumn weather, and so continued, with little interruption, throughout all our wandering. The sky calm, the sun weak and often clouded, the mornings misty, the evenings fine, the earth moist but the roads clean; in a word, the most favourable of seasons, and plenty of fruit everywhere. We were in the best of health and of spirits: he, eager to see and ready to admire everything; I, well content to get exercise and, above all, to travel haphazard. As for money, many personages in the romances never appear to need it: they carry a retinue, they prosecute their enterprises, they live everywhere, no one exactly knowing how they obtain the means of doing

so, and often when it is quite clear that they cannot have such means; the privilege is undoubtedly high, but there are inn-keepers who might be disposed to ignore it, and so we thought it best to carry some funds about with us. Thus nothing was wanting to the one for his adequate amusement, to the other for an agreeable circuit in the company of the one; while many poor creatures were justly surprised to find that people who were expending a little gold on their own pleasure reserved a few sous for the needs of the unfortunate.

Follow us on a map of the environs of Paris. Imagine a circle having for its centre the fine bridge of Neuilly near and lying due west. This circle is twice bisected by the Seine, and once by the Marne. Set aside the portion comprised between the Marne and the little river of Bièvre; take only the large circuit which begins at the Marne, crosses the Seine below Paris, and ends at Antony on the Bièvre; you will then have approximately the track which we followed in our visit to the most thickly wooded, prettiest, or most passable scenes of a district which, without being in any sense beautiful, is reasonably attractive and diversified.

In this manner twenty days were expended at a cost of some eleven louis. Had we made this excursion in what might have appeared some more convenient manner, we should have been tied and frequently thwarted; we should have spent more, and it would certainly have been less productive of amusement and good-humour.

To bring too rigid an economy to bear on things of this kind is even a greater inconvenience. It is better far to stay at home than to dread at each hostelry the appearance of the bill of fare, and in ordering dinner to contrive in such a way as to order the least that is possible. There is an end to all pleasure, unless a certain ease and freedom are

brought thereto. It becomes not merely indifferent, but disagreeable; it raises hopes which cannot be fulfilled, never turns out as it should, and, however little it has involved in care or money, is at best a sacrifice for nothing.

In my small acquaintance with France, Chessel and Fontainebleau are the only places where I should consent of my free will to settle down, and of these two Chessel is the only one in which I could wish to live. You will hear of me there before long.

I have already told you that the aspens and birches of Chessel are not like other aspens and other birches; the chestnuts, the ponds and the punt differ also from the rest of their species. There the autumn sky is like the sky of the fatherland. That muscat grape! those pallid asters which are now loved by both of us, though once you did not care for them! and the fragrance of the hay of Chessel in that splendid barn wherein we leaped in childhood! What hay! What cream-cheeses! And then those magnificent heifers! How pleasantly the chestnuts, poured from the sack, roll upon the floor above my study! It seems like a sound of our youth. But pause.

My friend, happiness is over. You have your business; you have a state of life; your reason ripens, your heart, it is true, does not change, but I feel my own contracting. You have no time any longer for setting chestnuts in the ashes, they must be prepared for you. What have you done with our pleasures? Six days hence, in any case, I shall be with you at Chessel: so much is decided.

LETTER LIII

FRIBOURG, *March* 11 (VIII).

What would have befallen me in the absence of this inheritance I can barely speculate; assuredly I had no such expectations, and yet I was more weary of the present than concerned for the future. Amidst the tedium of isolation I had at least the privilege of security. The fear that I might want for necessities was scarcely present to my mind, and now that no excuse for such fear can in any sense be said to remain, I experience how void it is for a heart without passions to have nothing pleasant to perform, and to be fated still to abide among strangers, though possessing the competence required for an easy life.

It was time that I took my departure, for I was at once both well and very ill. I was in the enjoyment of those advantages which so many people seek without knowing them, which others condemn out of envy, which it would be distressing to be deprived of in society, though few pleasures are imparted by their possession. I am by no means one of those who regard wealth as despicable. Without home, with nothing to call for my management, free equally from dependence and embarrassment, I had what suited me well enough in such a town as Lyons, a tolerable lodging, horses, and a table at which I could entertain—shall I say?—my friends. In a large town any different way of life would have been more wearisome, yet that one did not content me. It might have offered some speciousness, had there been any one to share it with me who found pleasure therein, but I am of those who are destined to be ever as if they were not.

We used often to say that a reasonable man is not commonly unfortunate, supposing that he is free and has a

modicum of that power which is imparted by money. I am here, notwithstanding, in Switzerland, without pleasure, a prey to weariness, and knowing not what resolution to take. I have no family; there is nothing to bind me to the place; you will not come, and I am utterly solitary. I am not without a certain confused hope that this state of things will end. Since it is possible for me eventually to settle down, I must think about doing so, and perhaps the rest will follow.

Snow is still falling; I shall remain at Fribourg till the season is more advanced. You are aware that the servant who accompanies me hails from here. His mother, who lives at Fribourg, is very ill, and she will have the consolation of his presence. Independently of this, for the next month or thereabouts, I am as well off here as elsewhere.

LETTER LIV

FRIBOURG, *March* 25 (VIII).

It was scarcely worth while, you tell me, to forsake Lyons so soon and to take refuge in a country town; for my answer I send you a view of Fribourg. Though it is not altogether accurate, and the artist has preferred to compose his scene rather than copy it faithfully, you will see at least that I am in the midst of the rocks. To be at Fribourg is to be also in the country. The town is environed by rocks and is built, in fact, upon them. Almost every street has a steep incline, but despite its inconvenient situation it is better planned than most of the small towns in France. In the vicinity, and even outside the gates, there are many picturesque and a few somewhat wild scenes.

The hermitage termed the Madeleine does not, however, deserve its notoriety. It is occupied by a species

fool who has turned a half-saint, finding no other folly for a refuge. This man has never had the spirit of his condition; in the executive he was not a magistrate, and in the hermitage he is not a hermit; he wore the hair shirt under his officer's uniform, and he wears the hussar's trousers under the anchorite's garb.

The rock was well selected by the first founders. It is dry and in a good situation. The persistency of the two men who excavated it unaided is assuredly not a little remarkable. Yet this hermitage, which is visited by all the curious, is among those things which it serves no purpose to see, and of which an adequate conception can be formed by a knowledge of its dimensions.

I have nothing to tell you of the townsfolk, for I am not one of those who become gifted with the knowledge of a people after a few minutes' talk to one or two of them. I am not a traveller by nature. I notice merely a touch of the old times in their manners; the antique characteristics are effaced slowly among them. Men and places still wear the Helvetic physiognomy. Tourists seldom come here, for there are no glaciers or lakes of importance, and no monuments. Those, notwithstanding, who are visiting only the western parts of Switzerland, should at least cross the canton of Fribourg at the base of its mountains; the low grounds of Geneva, Morges, Yverdun, Nidau and Anet are not Swiss at all; they are like the low-lying lands of other countries.

LETTER LV

FRIBOURG, *March* 30 (VIII).

I perceive as of old the charm of a beautiful scene, but I feel it less, or the way in which I feel it is no longer sufficient for me. I could rather say: I remember that

this is beautiful. In the past also I turned away from places that were lovely, but then it was through impetuosity of longing, the disquietude begotten of that which is enjoyed alone, and that it was possible to possess more completely. To-day again I leave them, but it is because of the weariness of their silence. They do not speak loud enough for me. That which I would see and hear is not to be seen or heard, and I am conscious that having failed so utterly to find myself in outward things, I am coming to such a pass that I cease to find myself in myself.

I am beginning to look upon the physically beautiful as upon moral illusions; all grows pallid imperceptibly, as grow it must. The consciousness of what is visibly agreeable is only the indirect perception of an intellectual harmony. How should I find in outward things those emotions which are no longer in my heart, that eloquence of the passions which I possess not, those still sounds, those transports of hope, those accents of the being who enjoys, the allurement of a world henceforth renounced?

LETTER LVI

THUN, *May* 2 (VIII).

All must end inevitably; slowly and by gradations only does man increase his being, and after the same manner he must lose it.

I respond no longer to anything except that which is extraordinary. I need romantic sounds before I begin to hear, and novel sights if I am to remember that which I loved in an earlier age.

LETTER LVII

THE BATHS OF SCHWARTZ-SEE,
Morning of May 6 (Year Eighth).

The snow has melted early from the roots of the mountains. I am going to and fro in search of a dwelling, and reckon to tarry here some two days. The valley is smooth, and the mountains are steep from the very base; encompassed by pastures, pines and waters, it is one of those solitudes which I love, and it is a fair season; yet the hours are long.

We have spent some pleasant ones by your pool of Chessel. You found it too small; but here where the lake is well enclosed, and its expanse considerable, you would lose patience with the keeper of the baths. He takes in a number of invalids during the summer, for whom exercise and something to while away the time must be both necessary, and yet he has no boat, though the lake is full of fish.

LETTER LVIII

May 6, evening.

Here as elsewhere, and perhaps rather more than elsewhere, there are fathers of families who continue firmly persuaded that a well-conducted woman should barely know how to read, since those who believe that they can write forthwith indite letters to lovers, while, on the other hand, bad writers do not have lovers at all. Furthermore, to insure their daughters turning out good housewives, knowledge should be confined preferably to the making of good soup, and keeping stock of the kitchen linen.

Notwithstanding, a husband whose wife has no other gift than the preparation of fresh and salt broth is apt to grow

bored, to feel weary of home life, and to contract the habit of absenting himself. He is alienated the more quickly when his wife, thus forsaken and thus engrossed by household cares, herself becomes soured in disposition; he ends by being always away when she has passed thirty years of age, and, amidst so many opportunities of expenditure, by dissipating elsewhere the money which is essential for his immunity from weariness, but which also would have made things easy at home. Distress enters, ill temper increases, and the children, left invariably with their discontented mother, wait only for the age of escape, like their father, from the wretchedness of that domestic life, to which parents and children might have been attached equally, had a sweeter disposition in the woman established, from her youth upwards, a more cheerful spirit therein.

Such little drawbacks are acknowledged by family men of this kind, but where is it otherwise, they would argue? Besides, we must also be just, and confess that there is some compensation, for the saucepans are always bright.

These excellent housewives know precisely the number of stitches which their daughters should knit in an hour, and how many candles should be burnt after supper in any well-regulated domicile; they correspond well enough to the requirements of certain men who pass two-thirds of their days in drinking and smoking. The chief consideration for these is that they should not be compelled to devote more *batzen* to their house and their children than they spend crowns in the ale-house, and, for the rest, they have married to secure a first-class servant.

In homes where these principles obtain, few marriages are dissolved, because nobody willingly repudiates a drudge who looks well after him, receives no wages, and has brought him a dowry; but seldom also do we find the sort of union which confers happiness on life, is adequate to the needs of

a man, and dispenses him from seeking elsewhere for enjoyments that are less real, and to which undeniable disadvantages attach.

The defenders of these principles are capable of citing the slender intimacy which characterises marriages in Paris, and other marriages in places which are like Paris, as if the reasons which make such intimacy out of the question in capitals, where conjugal union is not thought of, could obtain in an altogether different walk of life, and in places where such intimacy would spell felicity. There it is pitiable to remark the isolation of the two sexes. Nothing is so sad, above all for women, who have so little in the way of compensation, for whom there are no pleasurable hours and no places of relaxation. Rebuffed, soured and reduced either to a rigid economy or to a life of muddle, they set themselves to follow the routine with moroseness, and even through spite; they meet among themselves but seldom, and become devotees because they know no place of refuge but the church.

LETTER LIX

From the CHÂTEAU DE CHUPAN,
May 22.

By two o'clock behold us already in the woods in quest of strawberries. They covered the southern slopes, and though many were barely formed, there were yet a goodly number which had already the bloom and fragrance of maturity. The strawberry is one of the sweetest of natural products. It is plentiful and wholesome so far even as the borders of the polar zones. I regard it as among fruits what the violet is among flowers—delightful, beautiful and simple. Its odour is diffused by the light breath of the zephyrs, as that breath fitfully penetrates the

leafy arches of the woodland, stirs gently among thorny thickets, or lifts and trains the bindweeds clinging to the high trunks. It is borne abroad into the densest umbrage by the warm air of the more open ground, where the strawberry also ripens; it blends with the moist freshness and seems to exhale from moss and bramble. Sylvan harmonies, ye are made up of such contrasts!

While the stir of the breeze was almost imperceptible in the fresh and shady solitudes, a rough wind was blowing freely over the summits of the fir trees; their branches shivered, clashed and interlaced with a romantic sound, and the topmost twigs, separating ever and again in their swaying, revealed to us their pyramidal crowns, made splendid by the radiance of day and glowing with all its fires, above the shadows of that silent soil from which their roots drew nourishment.

When our baskets were filled we bade good-bye to the woods, some all gaiety and the rest contented. We proceeded by narrow paths over meadows enclosed by hedges planted through all their length with well-grown wild cherries and tall wild pears. Land which is still patriarchal when man has ceased to be so! Without precisely experiencing pleasure, I was still at my ease. I said to myself that pure delights are in a sense merely tasted; that economy in enjoyments is, so to speak, the industry of happiness; that it is insufficient for a pleasure to be merely free from remorse, or simply without alloy, in order to be truly pure; that it is requisite further that only enough of it should be accepted to perceive its flavour, to nourish the hope concerning it, and that one must know how to reserve for other days its most alluring promises. To prolong enjoyments by eluding desire, to refrain in any way from precipitating a joy, to forbear from exhausting life—in all this there is a very refined rapture. We do not properly

enjoy the present unless we look forward to a future which will at least be its equal, and we lose all happiness if we seek to be absolutely happy. This law of Nature constitutes the inexpressible charms of a first love. A certain tardiness is essential to our enjoyments, a continuity in their development and a certain vagueness about their limit. We need constant pleasure rather than acute and transient emotions, the tranquil possession which is self-sufficient in its domestic peace, and not that fever of delight which, with a consuming intoxication, destroys by the repletion of our hearts, outwearied by its repetitions, its loathings, the emptiness of all its hopes and the exhaustion of its innumerable regrets. But ought even our reason to dream, in the midst of a restless society, of that felicity independent of pleasures, of that repose so ill understood, of that constant and simple well-being wherein enjoyment ceases to be thought of, where there is no longer any need of desire?

Such should be the heart of man, but man has transformed his life; he has denaturalised his heart, and colossal shadows have intervened to weary his desires because the natural proportions of true beings have seemed too precise for his foolish grandeur. Social varieties frequently remind me of the overweening puerility of a prince who thought it a great achievement to order the symbol of autocracy to be emblazoned with lamps on the vast slope of a mountain. We have also emblazoned the mountains, but our labours have been on a lesser scale, the performance of our own hands and not the work of slaves; we have not had masters to receive, but friends to place.

A deep ravine borders the castle-woods and is hollowed among precipitous and savage rocks. At the top of these rocks, and in the heart of the forest, there would appear to have been quarries in the past; the sharp angles which the excavations originally left have been rounded by time, but

a kind of enclosure remains, forming nearly the half of a hexagon, and large enough to hold some six or eight persons with ease. After slightly levelling the stones which form the floor, and improvising the bench designed to serve as the buffet, we contrived a circular seat of large branches covered with leaves. The table was a plank mounted on logs left thereabouts by the beech-cutters.

All this had been prepared in the morning, but the secret was well kept, and, laden with strawberries, we conducted our hosts into this wild and unfamiliar retreat. The women seemed overjoyed at discovering the conveniences of an elegant simplicity encompassed by a scene of terror. Branches of pine were lighted in an angle of the rock overhanging the precipice, which was rendered less affrighting by the foremost branches of the beech trees. Spoons of boxwood fashioned after the manner of Koukisberg, glasses of fine porcelain, baskets of wild cherries, were ranged informally on the stone buffet, reinforced by platefuls of clotted mountain cream and bowls of that second cream which serves for coffee and, with its slight flavour and perfume of almonds, is said to be only known in the Alps. Decanters filled with sweetened water stood ready for the strawberries.

The coffee was not ground or even roasted. Such cares are fitly relinquished to the women who, as a rule, prefer to have charge of them, because they realise keenly that we must prepare our own enjoyments, and must owe, partially at least, to ourselves that which we desire to possess! A pleasure which offers of itself without being to some extent sought out by desire not infrequently loses its grace, as a good thing too long awaited misses also frequently the right moment on which its merit depends.

All was prepared, all seemed to have been foreseen, and the coffee was on the point of being made, when the simplest of all the requisites proved to be wanting. The

was in fact no water. We set about joining some cords, which till then had been designed only for binding the bundles for our seats, or securing those which shaded us, and at the sacrifice of some of the flagons we succeeded in drawing some ice-cold water from the torrent three hundred feet below us.

We made a familiar party, and our laughter had the ring of sincerity. The weather was beautiful; the wind raged through the long ravine where, in the darksome depth, the torrent, all white with foam, surged between the pointed rocks. The K-hou-hou sang in the woods about us, and woods higher up multiplied all these austere sounds. The great bells of the cows going up to Kousin-berg could be heard at a long distance. The wild odour of the burning pinewood blended with the mountain sounds, and in the midst of simple fruits, in a desert asylum, the coffee smoked on the social board. Those notwithstanding among us who alone enjoyed these moments were those who were unconscious of the moral harmony. Ah, sad faculty of dwelling on that which is absent! . . . But no two hearts were alike among us. Not in every man has unsearchable Nature placed the end of his life! The void and the overwhelming truth are in the heart which pries into itself; the transporting illusion can come only from one who is loved. We do not experience the vanity of the good things possessed by another, and thus by its own self-deception every affectionate heart may become truly happy amidst the nothingness of all direct advantages.

For myself, I fell to dreaming instead of experiencing pleasure. There is very little that I really require, but I want this little to be in harmony. The most alluring pleasures would not attract me if discord were [illegible] in, and the feeblest of unblemished enjoyme[illegible]

for all my desires. Simplicity is hence my necessity; this alone is harmonic. To-day the scenery was too beautiful. Our picturesque dining-hall, our rustic hearth, a snack of fruit and cream, our transient familiarity, the song of a few birds, and the wind continually flinging fir-leaves into our cups—these were enough. But the torrent in the darkness, the far-away rumours of the mountains—these were too much. Yet it was I only who heard.

LETTER LX

VILLENEUVE, *June* 16 (VIII).

I have just returned from a pilgrimage through most of the habitable valleys between Charmey, Thun, Sion, Saint-Maurice and Vevey. Hope did not prompt me to take it, nor did I do so to admire or to enjoy. Once again I have seen those mountains which I beheld nearly seven years ago. I did not take back to them that impulse of an age which sought so eagerly their wild beauties. The old names distinguish them, and I bear also the same! I threw myself on the strand near Chillon; I listened to the waves, and yet again I sought to interpret their voices. There in that same spot where I had tarried of old, that strand so beautiful in my memory, those waves which France does not know, and the high mountain-summits and Chillon and Leman, have failed to impress or to satisfy me. I was there as I have been elsewhere; I may revisit places, I cannot restore times.

What manner of man am I now? Were it not for the consciousness of an order, for the desire to be still of some good, I should conclude that the consciousness of external things is already extinct, and that all which within me connects with ordered Nature has ceased to be.

You will not expect from me a historical statement or

the descriptions of an observing traveller designed for the instruction of himself and the general improvement of geographical knowledge. A recluse will scarcely discourse to you of human society, which you frequent more than himself. He will not have adventures to recount or the romance of his life to unfold. But that which I experience I continue to impart, as agreed, because it is with me that you are familiar and not with that which environs me. When we converse with one another it is about ourselves only, for there is nothing more near to us. It occurs to me sometimes with surprise that we did not live together; there is a certain contradiction and something of impossibility about it. An occult destiny must have drawn me to seek far from you for I know not what, when it was open to me to remain where you were, but forbidden to take you away with me.

I can scarcely say what necessity has recalled me into a region in which, although set apart from the common, I find beauty no longer, nor yet can find myself. Was not our tendency to think and to feel in common actually my foremost requirement? Was it not indispensable that we should dream apart from all on that great agitation which hollows in the perishable heart an abyss of longing incapable of being filled, as it would seem, otherwise than by imperishable things? We taught ourselves to smile at that impulse, ever ardent and ever deceived; we applauded that skill which has made capital out of it to prove us immortal; we sought zealously for examples of the grossest and most powerful illusions, so that we also might be persuaded that death itself and all visible things were but phantoms, and that intelligence would be prolonged through some divine dream. We abandoned ourselves with a species of indifference and impassibility to forgetfulness of the things of earth, and, in the unison of our two souls, we pictured the harmony of a divine world concealed under the vesture of the visible.

But now I am alone, with nothing to sustain me longer. Four days since I roused up a man who was perishing in the snow upon Sanetz. His wife, his two children, all dependent on him, and of whom he appears to be truly the husband and father, as were the patriarchs of old, and as one is still in the mountains and the deserts, all three, exhausted and half-dead with fear and cold, were calling to him among the rocks and over the edge of the glacier. At length we came to them. Imagine a wife and two children happy! and all the rest of the day I breathed as a free man, and there was an unwonted elasticity in my step. But since then the same silence has environed me; nothing transpires to render me sensible of my existence.

Hence I have been seeking through all the valleys to acquire some isolated pasturage which will yet be easily accessible, moderately clement in temperature, pleasantly situated, watered by a stream, and within sound of a torrent or the waves of a lake. I have no wish for a pretentious domain, but something good-sized and of the kind which is not met with in the Rhone valley. I want also to build a timber house, which will be easier here than in the Bas-Valais. When I have settled, I shall go to Saint Maurice and Charrières. I am not anxious to do so at present, in case my natural indolence and the attachment to places which I form so easily, if I have any attraction towards them, should tempt me to remain at Charrières. I prefer to select a convenient site and then build after my own fashion, with the view of locating myself for a time, or perhaps for always.

Hantz, who speaks the patois and knows also a little German of the Oberland, explored the valleys and highways, collecting information in the villages. For myself. I proceeded from chalet to chalet across the moun
and through places which he would not have

pass, though he is more robust than I am and more at home in the Alps—places, let me add, which I should not have attempted myself if I had not been alone.

I have found an estate which would suit me to admiration, but I am not sure that I can acquire it; there are three owners, two at La Gruyère and the third at Vevey, and this last, they say, has no intention of selling, but I require the whole notwithstanding.

If you know of any new map of Switzerland, or of a topographical chart of some of its divisions, pray send it on to me. Anything obtainable here is exceedingly faulty, though I know that recent maps are often very carefully executed, marking the position of many places with considerable exactitude. It must be confessed that very few countries are so difficult to survey.

I have thought of attempting myself a survey of the small area comprised between Vevey, Saint-Gingouph, Aigle, Sepey, Etivaz, Mont-bovon and Sempsales, always supposing that I secure the estate I mention, near the Dent de Jamant, which would be the apex of my principal triangles. I have promised myself to while away in this labour the restless season of heat and fine weather. I should have undertaken it next year, but this I have now renounced. When all the gorges, all the further sides and all points of view are familiar to me in all their details, nothing will be left for me to find. It is far better to reserve the sole means of escape from periods of intolerable weariness by losing myself in new places, seeking eagerly for things which do not interest me in any sense, clambering the most difficult peaks with zeal for the verification of an angle, to make sure of a line which I shall forget afterwards, that I may return and observe it as if I had really some purpose in view.

LETTER LXI

SAINT-SAPHORIN, *June* 26 (VIII).

I do not regret having brought Hantz with me. Tell Madame T. that I send my thanks for her gift. He seems to me frank and susceptible of attachment. He is intelligent also, and plays on the horn with more skill than I should have expected.

In the evening when the moon has risen I charter two boats. In my own I take one oarsman only, and when we have got well out upon the lake there is a bottle of wine provided for him on condition that he sits still and says nothing. Hantz occupies the second boat, and the rowers therein gently dip their oars in the water as they pass to and fro at a little distance in front of my own, which rests without motion or is swayed softly by the light swell of the waves. His horn accompanies him, and two German women sing in concert.

He is an excellent man, and one whom I must bind to my interests, as he has already discovered that his situation is tolerably advantageous. He assures me that he has no further anxiety, and that he hopes I shall keep him always. I think that hope is well founded. Why should I forego this my sole advantage, the service of a contented man?

For certain intimate acquaintances I once renounced the only resources which I possessed. To relinquish to one another those who seemed to find some felicity together, I gave up my only hope. These and yet other sacrifices have produced no good result, but here is a valet who is happy, and yet I have done nothing for him beyond treating him as a man. I esteem him because such treatment has not caused him surprise, and he regards it so simply that he is unlikely to abuse it. Besides it is not true that kindness ord

produces insolence; it is weakness which does so. Hantz is fully aware that I talk to him somewhat confidentially, but he realises quite as fully that I know how to speak as a master.

You would not suspect him of reading the "Julia" of Rousseau, but, as we rowed yesterday over to the Savoy side, he exclaimed: "This then is Meillerie!" The incident need not disturb you; remember that he is devoid of pretensions. He would not be with me if he had the spirit of the ante-room.

The harmony of sounds above all, by uniting an undefined extension to a sensible yet vague motion, imparts to the soul that perception of the infinite which it believes itself to possess in time and space.

I confess that it is natural for man to regard himself as less bounded and finite, as something greater than his present life, when some sudden perception unveils the contrasts and equilibrium, the interchainment and organisation of the universe. This perception manifests like the discovery of a world which he has yet to explore, like the initial glimpse of that which may be one day fully disclosed to him.

I have a preference for songs that are in a language which is unknown to me. Words otherwise mar in my estimation the beauty of the air, or at least detract from its effect. It is scarcely possible that the ideas which they express should accord completely with those which the sounds impart to me. Moreover, the German accent has something peculiarly romantic. Slurred and indeterminate syllables do not please me in music. Our mute *e* is disagreeable when the song forces it to obtrude, and the useless syllable of feminine rhymes is rendered almost always in a false and grating manner, because, in fact, it is almost impossible to produce it otherwise.

I am very fond of the blending of two or more voices; it leaves all its power and all its simplicity to the melody. As for scientific harmony, those beauties are unknown to me; not being schooled in music, I do not enjoy what depends only on art or on difficulties.

The lake is exceedingly lovely when the moon whitens our two sails; when the echoes of Chillon repeat the notes of the horn, and the vast wall of Meillerie contrasts its darkness with the soft luminosity of the sky, with the glancing lights of the waters; when the waves break against our drifting boats; when their far-away roll is audible on the countless pebbles brought down by the Vevayse from the mountains.

You who have the gift of enjoyment, why are you not here to listen to these two women's voices sounding in the night over the waters? For myself, I must leave all. I like, notwithstanding, to be warned of my losses when the austere beauty of scenery prompts me to forget how vain is all in man, even to his regrets.

Pool of Chessel! Our wanderings there were less beautiful, but they were more happy. Nature overwhelms the heart of man, but friendship satisfies it; we lean mutually on each other, we converse, and all is forgotten.

I shall secure the place in question, but must wait a few days before I can obtain the evidences required for completion. I shall then put the work in hand forthwith, for the season is advancing.

LETTER LXII

July (Eighth Year).

I have been all along meaning to ask you for a copy of the "Manual of Pseusophane." I have lost my own, how I do not quite know. There is nothing in it about which

I really need to be admonished, but reading it morning by morning I shall be reminded more vividly how much I ought to be ashamed of my weakness.

I am thinking of appending a note on certain hygienic matters, on those things of individual and, so to speak, local habit, to which, in my opinion, sufficient importance is not attached. Aristippus could scarcely enjoin them or his imaginary disciple, or on his real followers, but this note would be of more practical utility than general considerations for maintaining in my case that well-being and physical efficiency which combine to support the soul, itself so physical.

I labour under two great disabilities; one alone would possibly prove my destruction, but between the two I contrive to go on living, because of the opposition between them. Were it not for my constitutional melancholy, my dejection, my abdication, were it not for my quiet animosity against all that is held desirable, the activity which constrains and convulses me would consume me sooner, and not less vainly; my disillusion serves at least to reduce it. Reason should moderate it, but between two such gigantic forces my reason is weak indeed; all that it can do is to invoke the one to its assistance when the other strives to predominate. Thus it is possible to vegetate, sometimes even to sleep.

LETTER LXIII

July (Eighth Year).

It was midnight; the moon had set, the lake was restless, the sky clear, the night deep and lovely. Amidst the vagueness brooding over the earth might be heard the shivering of birches and the fall of poplar leaves; the pines gave forth wild murmurs; romantic sounds fell from the mountains; vast billows broke upon the strand. Presently the osprey began to cry among the cavernous

rocks; as she finished the waves subsided and there was an austere silence.

Yet, amidst the restless quietude, at long intervals, the nightingale uttered her lonely, single, reiterated note, song of ecstatic nights; sublime rendering of a primeval melody; unspeakable outburst of love and sorrow; voluptuous as the want which consumes me; simple, mysterious, immense as the heart which loves.

Abandoned in a kind of funereal repose to the measured motion of those pale, mute, unceasing waves, I became permeated with that movement, so slow and unvaried, with that enduring peace, those sounds isolated in the long silence. Too beautiful seemed Nature, too soft, too sweet those waters, the earth and the night; the tranquil harmony of all things was too much for my perturbed heart. I dreamed of the springtide of the perishable world, and the springtide of my life. I beheld the years as they pass, sad and sterile, from the eternity of the future into the eternity of the lost. I beheld the present, always vain and never possessed, unlinking its indefinite chain from the vague future, bringing my death nearer, till it became visible, marshalling through the night the phantoms of my days, decreasing, dissolving them; overtaking the last shadow, devouring as indifferently that day which will have none to succeed it, and closing the mute abyss.

As if all men had not passed away, and all had not passed in vain! As if life were real and essentially existing! As if the perception of the universe were the consciousness of a positive being, and the human ego more than the fortuitous expression of a transient combination! What would I? What am I? What do I ask of Nature? Is it a universal system, conformities, rights in correspondence with our needs? Does intelligence bring about those results for which my intelligence is looking? Every cause is hidden,

each end deceptive. Every form changes, all duration slips away; and the agony of the insatiable heart is but the blind course of a meteor wandering in the void where it must be lost. Nothing is possessed as we anticipate, nothing known as it is. We perceive relations only, not essences. We do not make use of things, but of their images. Sought without us and impenetrable within us, Nature is dark everywhere. "I feel," is the sole affirmation for him who would have truth only. And that which constitutes the certitude of my existence is also its torture. I do feel, I do exist, but it is to be consumed by unconquerable desires, to be plunged in the sorcery of a fantastic world, to be overwhelmed by its voluptuous deception.

What! Is happiness not the first law of human nature, pleasure not the first motive spring of the sensible world? If we do not seek pleasure, what end do we propose ourselves? If to live be merely to exist, what need have we to live? We can discover neither the first cause nor the true motive of any being; the wherefore of the universe remains inaccessible to individual intelligence. The end of our existence is unknown to us; every act of life is void of object; our desires, our cares, our affections are ridiculous, if these acts do not tend to pleasure, if these affections do not propose it to themselves.

Man loves himself, he loves man, he loves all animate things. Such love would seem essential to the organised being; it is the motive power of the forces which preserve him. Man loves himself; without this active principle, how could he act, how subsist? Man loves men because he feels as they feel, because he is close to them in the order of the world. What for him would be life in the absence of this relationship? Man loves all animate things. If he ceased to suffer at the sight of suffering, if he ceased to feel with those whose sensations are analogous to his own,

he would cease to be interested in anything outside himself, and might cease to love even himself; there is assuredly no affection wholly limited to the individual, since there is no being who is completely isolated.

If man feels in all things animate, the blessings and the evils which encompass him are as real for him as his personal affections; the happiness of all that he knows is requisite to his own happiness; he is bound up with all that feels; his life is in the organised world.

The chain of correspondences which have him for their centre, which cannot end entirely save at the limits of the world, constitutes him a part of the universe, a numerical unity in the number of Nature. The bond formed by these personal bonds is the order of the world, and the force which perpetuates its harmony is natural law. The necessary instinct which impels the animate being, passive when he permits it and active when he wills it to be so, is a subjection to general laws. Obedience to the spirit of these laws would be the science of any being who exercised will freely. The freedom of man in deliberation would be the science of human life; that which he wills in subjection shows forth to him how he should will when he is independent.

There is no perfection for an isolated being; his existence is incomplete, he is neither truly happy nor truly good. The complement of everything is outside itself, but that complement is reciprocal. There is a certain species of end for natural beings, and it is in that which causes productiveness when two bodies are brought together, which increases enjoyment when two sensations are shared mutually. Everything that exists is completed, all that is animated finds repose and satisfaction, in this harmony. This complement of the individual is chiefly in the species, and for man it has two modes, at once dissimilar and analogous. Such is his heritage: he is conscious of his

life after two manners, the rest is either suffering or nothingness.

Every unshared possession irritates our desires without filling our hearts; in place of nourishing, it voids and exhausts them.

To insure harmony in union, the being who participates in our enjoyment must be like us and yet different. Such conformity in the same species is found either in the difference between individuals or in the opposition of the sexes. The first accord produces the harmony which results from two beings similar and diverse, with the smallest degree of opposition and the greatest degree of similitude. The second gives a harmonic result produced by the greatest possible difference between those who are alike. All choice, all affection, all union, all happiness consist in these two modes. Whatsoever removes us from these may attract, but it deceives and exhausts us; what is contrary to them misleads us, making us either vicious or miserable.

We have no legislators nowadays. Some among the ancients attempted to lead man by his heart, and, being incapable of imitating, we blame their course. Institutions are forgotten in the concern for civil and penal laws. No genius has yet discovered all laws of society, all duties of life, in the necessity which unites men, in that which joins the sexes.

There is division amidst the unity of the species. Kindred beings differ, however, in such a way that their very contrasts incline them to love one another; separated by their tastes, yet necessary each to each, they are divided by their habits and conjoined by a mutual necessity. Those who spring from their union, formed equally of both, will notwithstanding perpetuate these differences. This essential effect of the energy imparted to the animal, this supreme result of his organisation, will be the crowning

moment of his life, the last degree of his affections, and to some extent the harmonic expression of his faculties. Therein is the power of the physical man, therein the grandeur of the moral man, therein the soul in its completeness, and he who has not loved fully has not possessed his life.

Abstract affections and speculative passions have won the homage of individuals and of nations. Blissful affections have been repressed or degraded; social industry has opposed the men which the primitive impulse would have conciliated.

Love must govern the earth which ambition wearies. Love is that peaceful and productive flame, that warmth of heaven which enlivens and renews, which causes birth and blossoming, imparts colour, grace, and hope to life. Ambition is that sterile fire which burns beneath the ice, consumes without animating anything, hollows vast caverns, disturbs in secret, flashes forth in opening abysses, and leaves a century of desolation to a country amazed by this illumination of an hour.

When some new incitement extends the relations of the man who makes trial of his life, he welcomes it eagerly, demands it of all Nature, abandons himself thereto and is elated therewith; he centres his existence in love, and in all things sees love alone. All other sentiments are lost in this profound sentiment, all thought leads up to it, all hope rests upon it. Everything is but suffering, emptiness, abandonment, if love withdraws; but if it approaches, then all is joy, hope and felicity. A far-off voice, a sounc air, the stir of the branches, the quivering of w announce, all express, all imitate its accents an its desires. The grace of Nature is in the moti the world's law in the eloquence of a glan alone does the morning light awaken life heavens; for this the noonday heat fer

earth under the woodland moss; to this the evening dedicates the pleasing melancholy of its mysterious glow. This spring is that of Vaucluse, these rocks are those of Meillerie, this avenue is that of Pamplemousses. Silence protects the dreams of love, the motion of the waters penetrates it with sweet agitation, the fury of the billows inspires its stormlike efforts, and all shall command its pleasures when the night shall be mild; when the moon shall enlighten the night; when bliss shall be in the shades and the radiance, in the solitude, in the air and the water and the night.

O blissful delirium! Sole moment left to man. This flower so rare, so isolated, so fleeting, under the cloudy sky, unsheltered, beaten by winds, wearied by storms, languishes and dies without opening; the keen air, a vapour, a breath, makes void the hope in its withered bud. We pass onward, still hope and hasten; far on, upon a soil as sterile, we see others as precarious, doubtful, momentary as itself, who like it will perish vainly. Happy he who possesses that which man should seek, who enjoys all which man should feel! Happy he also, it is said, who seeks, feels and stands in need of nothing, for whom to exist is to live!

It is not merely a mournful and morose but also a most fatal error to condemn this true and necessary pleasure, which, invariably looked for, ever renewing, independent of seasons and extended through the brightest portion of our days, forms the strongest and most alluring bond of human society. Truly a very singular wisdom is that wisdom which is opposed to the natural order. Every faculty, every energy is a perfection. It is good to be stronger than our passions, but to applaud the silence of the senses and the heart is merely stupid, for it is to base a claim to additional perfection on the very fact which makes us incapable thereof.

The true man is one who is the lover of love without forgetting that love is only an accident of life; when he is possessed by its illusions he enjoys and possesses them in his turn, but without forgetting that there are austere truths which take precedence of the most beautiful illusions. And further, the true man knows how to choose and also to wait with prudence, how to love consistently, how to yield himself without weakness as well as without reserve. The activity of a profound passion is for him the ardour of goodness, the fire of genius; he finds in love the voluptuous energy, the masculine enjoyment of the just, sensible, and great heart; he comes face to face with felicity, and knows how to gain nourishment thereform.

Ridiculous or guilty love is a degrading weakness; lawful love is the charm of life; there is madness only in the mistaken austerity which confuses a noble with a vile sentiment, condemning love indiscriminately, because, conceiving only men that are brutalised, it can imagine nothing but sordid passions.

This pleasure received, this pleasure imparted, this progression sought and obtained, this felicity offered and expected, this voluptuous confidence which impels us to look for everything from the beloved object; the still greater delight of rendering that object happy, of being mutually sufficient to each other, necessary one to another; this fulness of sentiment and of hope enlarges the soul and spurs it on to live. Unspeakable abandonment! He who has known can never feel ashamed thereof, and he who is not made to experience it is not made to pass judgment on love.

As needs scarcely be said, I do not condemn those who have not loved, but those who are incapable of loving. Our affections are determined by circumstances, but broad feelings are natural to all who are perfect in their moral

organisation; those who are incapable of love are also of necessity incapable of a generous sentiment or a sublime affection. They may be upright, good, industrious, prudent, may possess amiable qualities and even reflected virtues, but they are not men, and they are devoid of soul or genius. A person of this kind may be a desirable acquaintance, may command my confidence and even my esteem, but he will not be my friend. Hearts which are truly sensible, hearts which a sinister destiny has kept down from their first springtime, who shall blame you for having never loved? Every generous sentiment came natural to you, and all fire of the passions informed your virile intelligence. Love was necessary thereto, love was meant to nourish it, love would have shaped it to great things; but nothing has been accorded you: the silence of love has heralded the void in which your life is quenched.

The consciousness of the just and the honourable, the desire of order and the moral conformities, lead necessarily to the necessity of love. The beautiful is the object of love; harmony is its beginning and end; every perfection, all merits, seem to belong to it; the amiable graces invoke it, and a broad and virtuous morality ratifies it. Love, it is true, has no existence apart from the glamour of physical beauty, but it would seem to cleave even more closely to intellectual harmony, to the graces of thought, to the depth of feeling.

Union, hope, admiration, glamour increase for ever towards the perfect intimacy; that intimacy fills the soul which is exalted by their development. There pauses, and thence retrogrades the man who is impassioned without being sensible, who has no other need than pleasure. But the man who loves does not change like this; the more he obtains, the more he is bound; the more he is loved, the more he loves; the more he possesses that which he has

desired, the more he cherishes his possession. Having received all, he considers that he owes all; she who gives herself to him becomes necessary to his being; years of enjoyment do not weaken his desires, but add only to his love the confidence of a habitual felicity and the delights of a free but delicate intimacy.

Some presume to condemn love on the ground that it is a wholly sensual affection, having no other motive than a necessity which they term gross. But even in the case of our most complex desires, their true end seems invariably to connect with foremost physical needs; sentiment is only their indirect expression, and the purely intellectual man was never other than a phantom. Our necessities awaken within us the perception of their positive end, and the innumerable perceptions of objects which are analogous to those necessities. The direct means would not of themselves fill life, but these accessory impulses occupy it entirely, because they are without bounds. The man to whom life was intolerable without the hope that he could conquer the earth would not have conceived the ambition unless he had known hunger. Our wants combine two modifications of a single principle, appetite and sentiment; the preponderance of one over the other will depend on individual organisation and overruling circumstances. Every end of a natural desire is lawful, all means that it inspires are good, if they do not invade the rights of others or occasion in ourselves any real disorder which counterbalances their utility.

You have sought unduly to extend the field of duties, on the principle of exacting more than you want so as to obtain as much; and this is an error. If you demand too much of men they will rebel; if you ask them for chimerical virtues they will simulate them accordingly, saying that it costs little. But seeing that such virtue is not part of their nature, their secret conduct will be of an opposite kind,

while from the fact that it is secret you will be unable to curb its excesses, and can have recourse only to those dangerous means, the experiment of which will increase the evil by multiplying constraint and opposition between duty and inclination. You will think at first that the laws will be observed better because their infraction will be more skilfully masked, but false judgment, depraved taste, habitual dissimulation and hypocritical devices will be the true results.

There are signal physical oppositions in the pleasures of love; its desires perturb the imagination, its cravings transform the organs; the way of feeling and looking at such an object must therefore vary correspondingly. We must foresee the consequence of this disproportionate difference, and not combine moral laws therewith which are calculated to increase it still further. Such laws are the work of the aged, and aged people, possessing no longer the sentiment of love, can possess neither true modesty nor refinement of taste. They misconstrue that which their years are no longer in a position to understand. They would proscribe love altogether, could they find other means of perpetuating the race. Their superannuated senses wither that which should be contained in the graces of desire, and to avoid certain excesses which are detestable to their impotence, they devise such clumsy checks that society is incessantly troubled by real crimes with which no honest man would reproach himself in the absence of reflection.

Whatever is not actually hurtful should be permitted in love, for thereby man is either perfected or degraded. Therein, above all, he must restrain his imagination within the limits of a just liberty, place his happiness within the limits of his duty, and rule his judgment by an exact appreciation of the basis of laws. No other natural means can compare with it in its power to endow him with the

perception of all refinements of taste and of their real ground, to ennoble and restrain his appetites, to impress on his sensations a species of sincere and upright pleasure, to inspire the ill-organised man with something of the sensibility of the superior man, to unite, to conciliate them, to form a real fatherland, and institute a veritable society.

Leave us the lawful pleasures; these are our rights, this is your duty. You have, I fancy, supposed that something was achieved by establishing marriage as an institution. But a union in which the consequences of your institutions compel us to follow the conformities of chance, or to seek those of fortune, in place of the real conformities; the union which a single moment can for ever tarnish, which are alloyed of necessity by a multitude of disgusts; such union as this is inadequate. I demand of you a lasting illusion, and you offer me the naked chain of an unending slavery beneath those perishable flowers which you have so clumsily heaped over it, and have yourself left to wither. I ask you for an illusion which can disguise or renew my life; this Nature gave me. You dare to speak to me of the resources which remain. Would you suffer me to outrage vilely an engagement which, once made, should be observed religiously, and to persuade a woman to become contemptible in order that I may love her? Or, less directly guilty yet not less thoughtless, shall I cause anxiety to my family, bereave relations and dishonour her to whom this species of honour is socially so essential? Or yet again, to abstain from breaking any law and from exposing any one, shall I seek in abject places those who can be mine not by a sweet licence of manners, not in virtue of a natural desire, but because their trade places them at the disposal of all? Having ceased to belong to themselves, they are no longer women, but something indefinable which is analogous to womanhood. Forfeiture of every delicacy, incapacity for

any generous sentiment, and the yoke of misery, abandon them to the most brutal caprices of man, in whom such a habit will deprave both sensations and desires. Certain possible circumstances do, I admit, remain, but they are exceedingly rare, and may even fail to be met with in an entire life. Some men, restrained by reason, consume their days in privations equally unjust and compulsory; others, and the majority by far, make sport of the duty which opposes them.

From the standpoint of general opinion, this has ceased to be a duty, because its observation is contrary to the natural order of things. The disdain which is felt for it leads nevertheless to the habit of deferring simply to custom, of constituting one's own inclinations the sole law of conduct, and despising every obligation, the infraction of which does not actually involve legal penalties or social disgrace. Such is the unavoidable consequence of the real meannesses to which we have recourse daily for our amusement. What morality can you expect in a wife who deceives him who maintains her, or by whom she ought to be maintained; who is his nearest friend, and makes sport of his confidence; who destroys his repose, or laughs at him if he preserves it; and involves herself in the necessity of betraying him to the very end, by bequeathing to his affections the child that does not belong to him? Of all engagements, is not marriage precisely the one where trust and good faith are most vital for the security of life? How miserable is that sort of honesty which pays a crown scrupulously and reckons the most sacred promise that can be made between human beings as an idle word! Again, what morality can you expect from the creature who, while he makes sport of her, seduces a woman and despises her because she has become that which he sought, who dishonours her because she has lo him, tires of her because he has enjoyed her, and deserts

when she displays the visible tokens of having shared in his pleasures? What morality, what equity can you expect from that man, at the very least so inconsequent, who exacts sacrifices from his wife which, on his part, he does not make, requires her to be discreet and unapproachable, while he exhausts in secret connections the attachment of which he assures her, and to which she lays claim by right if her fidelity is not to degenerate into an unjust bondage?

Indiscriminate pleasures degrade man and guilty pleasures corrupt him, but love, apart from passion, does not abase him. There is an age for love and for enjoyment, there is one also for enjoyment without love. The heart is not always young, and even while youth remains to it, it does not always meet that which it can love truly.

There is good in every enjoyment which is exempt from injustice and excess, when it is ruled by natural decencies and possessed in accordance with the desires of a refined organisation.

The hypocrisy of love is one of the scourges of society. Why should love depart from the common law? Why should it not be just and sincere in that as in all things else? He alone is absolutely isolated from all evil who seeks in simplicity that which can afford him enjoyment unmixed with remorse. Every imaginary or accidental virtue rests under suspicion for me; when I see it rise up proudly from its false basis, I seek and do not fail to discover an internal ugliness therein beneath the guise of prejudices and the frail mask of dissimulation.

Permit and authorise pleasures in order that virtues may exist; demonstrate the reason of laws in order that they may be revered; invite men to enjoy so that you may be heard when you command them to suffer. Elevate the soul by the sentiment of natural pleasures, and you will make it strong and great, so that it [illegible]ect legitimate priva-

tions, and will even find enjoyment therein through a conviction of their social utility. I would have man make free use of his faculties, when they do not assail the rights of others. I would have him enjoy in order that he may be good; I would have him quickened by pleasure, yet directed by visible equity; I would have his existence just, happy and even voluptuous. I would have the thinking being make use of his reason on the subject of his duties. I have a very small opinion of the woman who is restrained only through a sort of superstitious dread of all which belongs to the enjoyments which she dares not confess that she desires even to herself.

I would have people ask themselves whether this or that thing is evil, and why, if so? If it be, let it be forbidden, but if not let it be enjoyed with an austere choice, with that prudence which is the art of finding greater pleasure therein, but without reserve, without shame and without disguise.

True modesty should alone set bounds to pleasure. Modesty is an exquisite perception, a part of perfect sensibility; it is the grace of the senses and the charm of love. It avoids all that our organs would repel, it permits all that they desire; it separates that which Nature has left to our intelligence the care of separating, and it is chiefly the neglect of this voluptuous reserve which quenches love in the unwise liberty of marriage.

LETTER LXIV

St. Saphorin, *July* 10 (VIII).

The very shadow of good sense is wanting to my present mode of life. I am aware, however, of my follies, and if I do not amend, it is at the same time without any special determination to persist in them. That I am not more

serious in my conduct is because I see no great importance in improvement. Half of the day and night I pass on the lake; when the time comes to leave it I shall have grown so accustomed to the equipoise of the waves, to the sound of the waters, that I shall feel ill at ease on the solid land, amidst the silence of the meadows.

On the one hand, I am taken for a man whose mental balance has been a little deranged by love; on the other, it is thought that I am an Englishman suffering from the spleen. The young men have taken it on themselves to apprise Hantz that I was the lover of a very beautiful foreign lady who has suddenly left Lausanne. It would seem advisable for me to cease these nocturnal wanderings, as I am pitied by the common-sense people, while the best take me for a fool. Hantz was asked at Vevey: "Are you not in the service of that Englishman about whom every one is talking?" So the evil spreads, and as for the dwellers on the coast, I believe that they would openly ridicule me if I were not well provided with money; as it is, I pass for a very wealthy personage. The innkeeper insists on addressing me as my lord, and altogether I am much respected. A rich foreigner and my lord are synonymous terms. Furthermore, when I return from the lake, I usually sit down to write, so that I go to bed in broad daylight. On one occasion the people of the inn, hearing some noise in my room and surprised that I had risen so early, came up to ask if I would not take anything that morning. I replied that I was unaccustomed to supper, and that I was just retiring to rest. The result is that I do not get up till noon, or, it may be, till one o'clock, when I call for tea and again start writing, after which, in place of dinner, I take tea again, with nothing in the way of solid food except bread and butter, after which I immediately repair to the lake. The first time that I ventured out alone in a small boat, obtained

expressly for the purpose, they noticed that Hantz remained on shore and that I started at the close of day. Thereupon the frequenters of the inn decided that at last the spleen had got the upper hand, and that I was about to furnish a picturesque suicide to the village chronicles. I regret now that the effect which might be produced by eccentricities of this kind did not occur to me beforehand. I do not care to cause observation, but I only began to realise it when the habit was already formed, and to change now would not cause less remark than to go on as I have been doing for the few remaining days of my sojourn. As if I did not know what to do with myself, I sought only how to pass away the time. When I am active I am not conscious of other needs, but when a prey to weariness I prefer at least to grow weary in idleness.

Tea is a signal assistance in growing weary at one's ease. Among all the slow poisons which form the delight of humanity, I believe that it is one of those best suited to our weariness. It imparts feeble but sustained emotion; as it is exempt from subsequent revulsion, so it degenerates into a habit of peace and indifference, into weakness which tranquillises a heart fatigued by longings, and it disembarrasses us of our dolorous energy. I took to it at Paris, and subsequently at Lyons, but here I have been so imprudent as to carry the habit to excess. The only thing that reassures me is that I am shortly to possess an estate, with labourers thereon, and this will occupy and restrain me. At the present time I am doing myself a good deal of injury, but rest assured that I shall soon turn wise of necessity.

I discern, or believe I discern, that the change which has taken place in me has been much increased by the daily use of tea and wine. I think that, other things being equal, the water-drinkers preserve much longer their keenness of

sensation, and also to some extent their original freshness. The use of stimulants causes our organs to grow old. Those immoderate emotions which are not within the order of natural agreement between external things and ourselves, efface the simple emotions and destroy that proportion so full of harmony which renders us alive to all external correspondences, when we owe, so to speak, our sensations only to them.

Such is the human heart, and the most essential principle of the penal laws has no other foundation. If the proportion between punishment and offence be destroyed, if too much recourse be had to the pressure of fear, our adaptability is lost, and by going further still we end by making shipwreck of ourselves. The courage which is required for crime is imparted to certain souls; in the weak all energy is extinguished, and yet others are driven to virtues of an atrocious order. If the emotion of our organs is exalted beyond the natural limits, they are rendered insensible to more moderate impressions. By employing too often, by exciting at undue times their extreme faculties, we blunt their normal forces, and they are reduced either to excessive activity, or to paralysis. We destroy that proportion ordained for diverse circumstances which originally united us even to lifeless things, and attached us to them by close bonds; which left us in expectation or in hope, indicating everywhere the occasions of feeling, yet leaving us invariably ignorant of the possible limit; which permitted us to believe that our hearts had vast capacities, because such capacities were indefinite, and because, always relative to things outside, they might always become greater in unknown situations.

There is also an essential difference between the habit of being actuated by impressions of other objects, or by the interior impulsion of an excitation prompted either

by our caprice or by a chance incident, and not by the lapse of time. We follow no longer the course of the world, we are animated when it would abandon us to repose; and often, when it would animate us, we are found in the exhaustion produced by our excesses. This fatigue, this indifference, renders us insensible to the impressions of things, to those external motives which, grown foreign to our habits, are found in discordance with our needs, or in opposition thereto.

Thus man does everything to cut himself off from the rest of nature, to make himself independent of the course of things, but this liberty, which is in no sense according to his true nature, is not true liberty. It is rather like the licence of a people who have broken from the yoke of the laws and of national habits; it takes away more than it gives, and substitutes the impotence of disorder in place of a legitimate dependence which would harmonise with our wants. Such illusory independence, which destroys our faculties and substitutes our caprices in place of them, puts us in the same position as the man who, despite the authority of the magistrate, was determined to raise the monument of an alien worship in the market-place, instead of being contented to put up an altar thereto in the privacy of his home. This person went into exile in the desert, where no one could oppose his will but where that will could produce nothing. He died there, free indeed, but without domestic altars, as well as without temples; without food, as well as without laws, equally without friends and masters.

I admit, it would be more to the purpose if I reasoned less upon the use of tea and at the same time gave up taking it immoderately; but when a habit of this kind has been formed we no longer know where to stop, [illegible] is difficult to give it up, it is perhaps not less

regulate it, at least unless one can equally regulate all one's manner of life. I do not know how to exercise great uniformity in one thing when it is forbidden me in the rest, or how to be consequent in my way of life when I have no hope either of constancy therein or of a line of conduct which would harmonise with my other habits. Moreover, I do not know how to act in the absence of means; many men have the art of creating means, or of accomplishing much with few. I could perhaps employ my means both with order and utility, but the first step requires art of another kind, and it is precisely this art that I do not possess. The difficulty, I think, arises from my inability to see things otherwise than as a whole, so far at least as their extent is within my horizon. I desire, therefore, that their principal proprieties should all be observed; and the sentiment of order, pushed perhaps too far or at least too exclusively, leaves me nothing to do and nothing to conduct amidst disorder. I prefer to let myself go far better than to attempt that which I cannot perform well. There are certain men who, although possessed of nothing, set up a household; they borrow, they intrigue, and have the intention of paying when they are able, but in the meantime they live and sleep tranquilly, and sometimes even succeed. I could not make up my mind to earn my living in this manner, and even if I resolved to chance it, I should not have the necessary talents. At the same time any one who, by industry of this kind, manages to keep his family without debasing himself, and without failing in his engagements, is undoubtedly a praiseworthy man. For myself, I am capable of little more than determining to do without everything, as if this were a law of necessity. I will endeavour always to employ means that are sufficient to the purpose that is best, or, by personal privations, to make those means sufficient which might otherwise be less than enough. I

would work day and night at things that are regulated, suitable and assured, so as to give necessities to a friend or to a child, but to venture amidst incertitude, and make sufficient by the force of a hazardous industry means that are by themselves altogether insufficient, cannot be hoped for from me.

From such a disposition one great inconvenience results, namely, that I cannot live well, prudently and in an orderly manner, nor even follow the bent of my inclinations or consider my own requirements, except with fairly assured resources, and that if I am possibly to be numbered among those who are capable of making good use of what is termed great fortune, or even of a comfortable mediocrity, I am also one of those who in actual destitution prove to be without resources, barely capable of avoiding misery, the ridiculous or the degraded, when fortune itself does not place them above the reach of want.

It is generally said that prosperity is more difficult to sustain than adversity, but it is quite the opposite for the man who is not subject to positive passions, who likes to accomplish thoroughly anything that he takes in hand, whose first need is that of order, and who considers things as a whole rather than in detail.

Adversity is good for a strong man with a touch of enthusiasm, for one whose soul clings to austere virtue and whose mind, fortunately for himself, does not discern its uncertainty ; but adversity is very sad and discouraging for him who finds nothing that he can make use of amidst it, because it is his desire to do good, and power is necessary to activity ; because he would be useful, and the opportunity of being so is seldom granted to an unfortunate. Unsustained by the noble fanaticism of Epictetus, he can withstand occasional misfortune, but not a life of misfortune, against which he rebels, in the end, realising that he loses therein all that

constitutes his existence. The religious man, and he above all who is certain of a God who rewards, has one great advantage; it is very easy to bear up against evil when evil is the greatest good that can be experienced. I must confess that I can see nothing so astonishing in the virtue of a man who is doing battle under the eye of his God, sacrificing the caprices of an hour to a felicity without limit or end. A man who is entirely convinced cannot surely do otherwise, unless indeed he has taken leave of his senses. It seems to me evident that one who gives way at the sight of gold, at the sight of a beautiful woman, or at other objects concerned merely with the passions of the earth, does not possess faith. Assuredly he sees nothing clearly but this world; did he behold with the same certitude that heaven and that hell which he recalls from time to time, were they as present to him as the things of the earth are present, it would be impossible for him ever to give way. Where is the subject who, granting that he is in possession of his reason, would not find it an utter impossibility to go contrary to the command of his prince, did that prince say to him: Here are all the riches and resources of my palace on condition that for the space of five minutes you shall not touch them; my eye is upon you; if you are faithful for that short time all these possessions and all their delights will be surrendered to your constant enjoyment for the space of thirty years.—Who does not see that such a man, however great his desire, does not need even strength to restrain himself for so short a period? All that he needs is faith in the word of his prince. Assuredly the temptations of the Christian are not stronger, and the life of man as compared with eternity is far less than five minutes in comparison with thirty years. There is an infinite distance between the felicity promised to the Christian and the advantage offered to the subject of

whom I am speaking; and, furthermore, about the word of the prince there may be a certain quality of doubt, while as to that of God there can be none. If, therefore, it does not stand demonstrated that out of every hundred thousand who are denominated true Christians there is at most one who can be said to possess faith, it is certain to my mind that nothing in the world can be demonstrated. As regards the consequences which follow from this, you will find them exceedingly simple, and I will return, therefore, to the wants that are created by the habit of drinking fermented liquors. I must do my best to assure you that you should believe in my promise to reform, though it is made precisely at a time when I am exercising the least control over myself, and have even permitted the habit to acquire greater strength.

I have first of all another admission to make to you, and that is that sleep is beginning to forsake me. When I have grown tired of tea, I know of no other remedy but wine; I can only sleep by having recourse to it, and so here is another excess, for I must take as much as possible without being visibly affected in the head. I know nothing so ridiculous as a man who prostitutes his thought before strangers, and makes it possible for them to say that he has been drinking by the way that he behaves and speaks. But for the man himself nothing is pleasanter to the rational faculty than to disconcert it a little occasionally. I will even claim that a partial excess in private is not less in place than a real excess is shameful in the presence of others and degrading even in secret. Many of the wines of Lavaux which are manufactured between Lausanne and Vevey are thought unwholesome, but when I am alone I make use only of Courtailloux, which is a wine of Neuchâtel, and is esteemed as much as a small burgundy; Tissot, in fact, regards it as equally wholesome. When I become a

proprietor, I shall have every opportunity of passing the hours, and in arranging, building, provisioning, and so forth, shall be in a position to occupy that internal activity, the calls of which leave me no repose amidst inaction. While these occupations continue, I shall gradually diminish the use of wine, and as regards tea I shall give up the habit altogether, by which I mean that for the future I shall take it very rarely. When all is arranged, and I am in a position to start the way of life which I have wished for so long, I shall thus be in a position to conform to it without experiencing the inconvenience of a sudden and great change.

As for the necessities which arise simply out of weariness, I trust that I shall know them no longer from the moment that I am able to subjugate all my habits to a general plan; I shall fill up the hours easily, I shall substitute for desires and enjoyments the interest of accomplishing that which is held to be good, and the pleasure of submitting to its true laws. I am not, however, looking forward to a happiness for which I am not destined, or which at any rate is still far away for me. I am simply imagining that I shall cease to feel the burden of time, shall be able to forestall weariness, or shall at least weary myself only after my own fashion. I have no wish to subject myself to a monastic rule. I shall reserve resources for those moments when the void will be most overwhelming, but most of them will be found in movement and activity. Other resources will be kept within narrow limits, and the extraordinary itself will be regulated. I require a fixed rule in order to fill my life; otherwise I should need excesses with no other term than the limit of my powers, and, even then, how would it be possible to fill a void which has no bounds? I have seen it said that the man of feeling has no need of wine. That may be true for one who has not acquired the habit. V

I have been sober and occupied for a few days, my brain becomes excessively active, and sleep is lost. I need some excess to draw me out of my restless apathy and to derange slightly that divine reason whose true powers weary our imagination while they do not fill our hearts.

There is one thing which surprises me—I come across people who seem to drink simply for the gratification of the palate, for purposes of taste, who, in fact, take a glass of wine as they would take some sweetened cordial. It is not quite the case all the same, but they believe it to be so, and if you were to ask them about it they would be quite surprised at the question. It is my intention to forbid myself this method of deluding the craving for pleasure and the futility of the hours. Whether what I shall put into its place will not prove of even less account I do not know, but at least I shall be able to say that here is an established rule which it is necessary to follow. But in order to follow it constantly, I must avoid both scrupulous exactitude and excessive uniformity; some pretext, some motive even should be found for breaking the rule, and once broken there is no reason why it should not be cast aside altogether.

It is desirable that what pleases us should be limited by an anterior law. When pleasure is actually experienced it is troublesome to adhere to any rule designed to limit it. Even those who would have strength enough for this purpose would be wrong not to have decided during the periods proper for reflection that which should be decided by reflection; they would be wrong to wait for the moment when such reasonings would alloy the agreeable affections which they are forced to obey. By recalling the reasons which forbid further enjoyment, that enjoyment which we do permit ourselves is reduced to a very small thing; it is of the nature of pleasure that it should be possessed with

a kind of abandon and plenitude—it fades when we seek to limit it otherwise than by necessity, and since it is necessary, notwithstanding, that reason should limit it, the only way that we can reconcile both these things, which otherwise are in opposition, is by imposing beforehand on pleasure the restraint of a general law. Though an impression may be altogether feeble, the moment when it acts upon us is that of a species of passion; the actual thing can scarcely be estimated at its true value, as, for example, among the objects of sight, dimensions are increased by proximity and presence close at hand. The principles by which it is intended to moderate desires must be established before these are experienced. In the actual moment of passion the recollection of this rule is no longer the importunate voice of cold reflection but the law of necessity, and this law will not trouble a wise man.

It is therefore essential that the law should be general; that of particular cases is under too strong suspicion. At the same time something should be abandoned to circumstances; this is a liberty which we should preserve, because it is impossible to foresee everything, and we should moreover submit ourselves to our own laws only after the same manner that our nature has subjugated us to those of necessity. There should be independence in our affections, but at the same time an independence contained within limits which it must not overstep. They are similar to the motions of the body; if these are embarrassed, constrained, or too uniform, they can have no grace, while, on the other hand, they are wanting both in decency and utility if they are too sudden, irregular, or involuntary.

It is an excess in order itself to pretend to harmonise perfectly, to moderate and regulate one's enjoyments, and to arrange them with rigid economy so as to make them durable and, as it were, perpetual. Such absolute regularity

is very rarely possible. Pleasure attracts and carries us with it, just as sadness restrains and binds us. We live in the midst of dreams, and of all our dreams that of a perfect order may well be the least natural.

I find it difficult to realise how it is that people seek intoxication from liquors when they have the intoxication of other things. Is not the stimulus of our passions to be sought in the need of emotion? When we are agitated by them, what can we find in wine, unless it be a repose which suspends their immoderate action?

It would appear that the man of great responsibilities seeks in wine oblivion and calm rather than energy—thus coffee, while it excites me sometimes, brings sleep to my brain, which has been fatigued by some other agitation. It is not usually the need of strong impressions which leads strong souls to excess in wines or liqueurs. A strong soul, occupied with great things, finds in their pursuit and their orderly government an activity more worthy of itself. Wine can only bring it rest. Were it otherwise, why have so many heroes of history, so many rulers, so many masters of the world been in the habit of drinking? Hard drinking was regarded as an honourable thing by more than one nation, yet many remarkable men had recourse to it when no such glory was attributed to it. I leave, therefore, all those who were carried away by opinion, and all those rulers who were only ordinary persons. There remain some strong men, occupied over things which were useful, and such have been able to find in wine alone repose for a brain overcharged with cares the urgency of which was minimised by the habit, yet without destroying that urgency, since there was no escape from it.

LETTER LXV

ST. SAPHORIN, *July* 14 (VIII).

You may rest assured that I shall offer no opposition to your views; should my weakness require me to be some day restored to reason over this matter, I should then recur to your letter. My feeling of shame would be deeper because some great change must have previously come over me, for at the present time I think absolutely as you do. Until then, if it be useless in this respect, your letter does not gratify me less. It is full of that solicitude of true friendship which dreads above all things that a man to whom we have, so to speak, transferred a part of ourselves should allow himself to lapse from virtue.

No, I shall never forget that money is one of the great instruments of man, and that by its use he shows what he is. The best possible is rarely granted us. Conditions, I mean, are so opposed, that to do good under all circumstances is next to impossible. I regard it as essential to live with a certain decency, managing my household affairs on an easy scale and by a regulated method. But setting this aside, it is inexcusable for a reasonable person to waste on superfluities that which can be applied to better things.

No one is yet aware that I intend taking up my abode in this place, but I am having some furniture and a number of other effects brought from Lausanne and Vevey. Some have therefore concluded that I am rich enough to sacrifice a considerable amount to the caprices of a transitory sojourn, and that it is my intention to hire a house for the summer. Hence they have inferred that I am extravagant, and though it is thought that I am slightly out of my mind, I have earned a good deal of respect in consequence.

Those who have better class houses to let do not approach

me as they would an ordinary individual, and for myself I am tempted to offer much the same homage to my louis when I think that one person is already being made happy. Hantz gives me ground for hope; if he is contented with so little concern on my part, others perhaps will be so now that it is possible for me to do something. Want, weariness and uncertainty tie your hands even over matters which are not ruled by money. It is impossible to arrange anything, or to follow any defined plan; encompassed by men who are overwhelmed by misfortune, though possessing some external advantage, we can do nothing to assist them, nor even make our inability known, so that they may not cherish resentment. Where is he who dreams of the fecundity of wealth? Men lose it as they squander their powers, their health and their years. It is so easy to hoard it or waste it, so difficult to employ it well.

There is a curé of my acquaintance near Friburg who is ill clothed, ill nourished and does not spend a stiver unnecessarily; he gives everything away, and also gives intelligently. One of his parishioners, I hear, talks about his avarice, but such avarice is admirable.

When we think of the importance of time and that of money, it is painful to witness the loss of a single moment or a single penny. All the same, we are borne away by the flux of events, and while some arbitrary convention consumes twenty louis, a necessitous person fails to obtain a crown. Chance brings us or takes away far more than would be necessary to console the unfortunate. Another chance condemns to inactivity the man whose genius might have saved a country. A bullet destroys a second of whom great things were predicted, and who had been gradually prepared for them by the experience of perhaps thirty years. Amidst such uncertainty, and under such a law of necessity, what becomes of all our calculations and all exactitude in details?

Apart from this incertitude, one would not wish for cambric handkerchiefs; cotton ones would answer just as well, and would enable us to give something to the poor journeyman artizan who goes without his tobacco when he is at work inside a house because he has no handkerchief which he can dare to use before everybody.

Such a life as this excellent curé leads must be a happy one, and if I were pastor of a village I should make haste to do likewise, before confirmed habit made comforts indispensable to me. But celibacy, solitude and independence of the world's opinion would be requisite, for, without these, excessive exactitude might prevent me transcending the limits of so narrow a sphere of utility. To dispose one's life in this way is to limit it too closely, and yet, depart from it and you are at once made subject to all those conventional wants the scope of which it is difficult to define, and which carry us so far away from the true order that people with a revenue of 20,000 livres will shrink from an expenditure of twenty francs.

We do not sufficiently realise the feelings of a woman who, dragging herself along a road with her child, wanting bread for herself and for him, at last picks up or receives a silver coin. She then enters with confidence some lodging where there will be straw for both; before retiring to rest she can make a bread-pudding; she falls asleep quickly and sleeps with contentment, leaving the needs of the morrow to Providence.

What evils to foresee and to repair, what consolations to impart, what pleasures to insure, all of which are, so to speak, contained in one purse of gold, like secret and forgotten seeds, waiting only the thoughtfulness of a generous heart in order to bear rich fruit. A whole country is miserable and depressed; necessity, unrest, disorder have discouraged all hearts; all men suffer and

chafe. Evil temper, dissensions, sickness, poor nourishment, brutal education, shameful habits, all may be changed. Universal order, peace, confidence, all can be restored, including hope itself and good manners, O fruitfulness of money!

He who has adopted a definite way of life, whose life can therefore be regulated, whose income is always the same, who lives within his income, is circumscribed thereby, just as a man is governed by the laws of his nature; the heir to a small patrimony, a country minister, a quiet man of means; all these can calculate what they have, fix their annual expenditure, reduce their personal wants to absolute necessities, and then set aside whatever little may remain for an enjoyment which will not perish. No single coin should leave their hands without bringing pleasure or repose to the heart of some unfortunate.

I enter with affection this patriarchal kitchen, under a simple roof, in the corner of the valley. I see vegetables prepared with milk because it costs less than butter; soup is made from herbs because the meat broth has been taken to a sick person at half a league away from the house. The best fruits are sold in the town, and the produce enables some measures of maize flour to be distributed among the needier women of the district, not as alms but on the pretence of material for making puddings and cakes. The wholesome fruits which are not costly, such as cherries, gooseberries and the ordinary grape, are consumed with as much relish as the fine pears or peaches which are not more refreshing, and are devoted to a better purpose.

In the house all is clean, but rigorous in its simplicity. Had avarice or penury constituted this rule, it would be sad to behold, but in this case it is the economy of benevolence. The methodical privations, the voluntary severity are sweeter than all the resources and lavishness of a

voluptuous life; these latter become necessities, the privation of which is intolerable, yet in which no pleasure is centred; the former furnish enjoyment ever repeated, and yet leaving us our independence. The clothes of children and father are generally of strong materials in texture and not easily soiled. The wife wears only a white cotton dress, and every year some pretext is found for distributing 200 ells of linen among those who, except for such bounty, might scarcely possess under garments. There is no china in the house, with the exception of two Japanese cups, which have long done service in the family. Everything else is made of hard wood, pleasing to the eye and kept with extreme cleanness; it breaks with difficulty, and can be renewed at very little cost, so that there is no need to fear anxiety or complaint. There is order without bad temper, and activity without inquietude. There are no servants in the house; its cares being few and under good regulation, the work is done by the family in order to preserve its freedom. Furthermore, they do not like either to be on the watch or to suffer loss, and are happier with extra work, provided that it increases confidence. There is, however, one woman, once a beggar, who comes for an hour daily to do the roughest part of the labour, and on each occasion she carries away her stipulated recompense. With this kind of life they know their expenditure to a penny. They know also the value of an egg, and how to give away, without regretting it, a sack of flour to the poor debtor persecuted by a rich creditor.

It is essential to the order itself that it should be followed without repugnance; actual wants are easy to confine by custom within the limits of what is sir necessary; but the wants of weariness are limits, and they lead futhermore to ad of fancy as illimitable as themselves.

has been foreseen, so that no distaste may interfere with the harmony of the whole. They make no use of stimulants, which render our sensations irregular, causing at once avidity and exhaustion; wines and coffee are alike interdicted; tea alone is permitted, but not under any circumstances more often than once every five days. No festivals come to trouble imagination by anticipated enjoyment, by indifference, whether unforeseen or affected, or by the revulsion and the weariness which succeed equally to frustrated or satisfied desires.

All days are pretty much alike, in order that all may be happy. When some are for pleasure and some are for work, the man that is not compelled by necessity soon becomes discontented with everything and curious to make a trial of some other mode of living. The incertitude of our hearts requires either uniformity to fix it, or perpetual variety to keep it in suspense and fascination. Amusements involve expenditure, and thus in the weariness of pleasures one loses not only personal contentment but the opportunity of being beloved in the midst of a contented village. At the same time, it does not follow that every hour of life should be insipid and joyless. We may become accustomed to the uniformity of weariness, but character is altered thereby; the disposition becomes hard or morose, and in the midst of the peace of things there is no longer the peace of the soul or the calm of happiness. Realising this, our excellent curé is anxious that the services which he renders, and the order which he has established, should confer upon his family the felicity of a simple life, and not the bitterness of privations and of misery. Each day brings the children its period of enjoyment, of such a kind that it is possible to renew it daily. No day ever ends without amusement for them, and without their parents

having the pleasure of parents, that, namely, of seeing their children always growing happier while always growing better. The evening meal is taken early, and consists of simple but pleasing viands, which they often prepare for themselves. After supper there are games in common at home or at the houses of their neighbours; running, walking, the gaiety so necessary for children, and so good at any age—these things never fail them, so much is the master of the house convinced that happiness depends on virtue, as virtue disposes to happiness.

This is how life should be led; here is how I should choose to lead it, above all if I had a considerable revenue. But you know what chimera I nourish in my thoughts. I do not believe in it, and yet I do not know how to reject it. Fortune, which has given me neither wife, nor children, nor fatherland, but has condemned me to I know not what of isolated restlessness, which has always prevented me from taking any part in the world as other men do; my destiny, in a word, retains me always in the struggle of endeavour, from which it never permits me to escape. It does not indeed dispose of me, but it prevents me disposing of myself. It would seem as if there is some force which restrains and prepares me secretly, that my life has some terrestrial end still unknown, and that I am reserved for something as to which I have no conception. This may be perhaps an illusion, and yet I cannot voluntarily dismiss what I think I foresee, and what time may actually have in reserve for me.

As a fact, I might settle myself here very nearly in the way of which I speak; my object would indeed be insufficient, but it would at least be certain; and, seeing plainly to what I must henceforth be devoted, I should compel myself to occupy in this daily course the disquietude which impels me. Assuring within a narrow circle the g

few men, I should gradually forget how useless I am to the race at large. I might possibly adopt this course, if I did not find myself in an isolation which would deny me all interior sweetness; if I had a child whose character I could form, whose progress I should follow in all its details; had I a wife who loved the cares of a well-conducted household, who would naturally enter into my views, who would find pleasure in domestic familiarity, and enjoy like myself all those things which have no other value than that of a voluntary simplicity.

I should soon be contented to follow order in the things of private life. An obscure valley would be for me the sole habitable earth. Suffering would exist there no longer, and I should thus be contented. As in a few years I shall be only a handful of dust, which even the worms will have abandoned, I might even come to regard the spring from which I obtained an inexhaustible supply of water as an adequate monument, and it would be enough for the enjoyment of my days if ten families found my existence useful.

In a suitable locality I should enjoy the simplicity of the mountain more than the luxurious ways of great towns. My floor would be of planks of pine, and in place of polished woods I should have pine walls; my furniture would also be pine, and not mahogany. I should enjoy setting chestnuts in the ashes on the kitchen hearth as much as I enjoy being seated on some elegant article of furniture twenty feet distant from a drawing-room fire and in the light of forty wax candles.

But I am alone, and beyond this reason I have yet others for doing differently. Did I know who will share my way of living, I should know in accordance with what requirements and what tastes I should have to

Could I be sufficiently useful in my domestic l

see that I limited thereto every consideration of the future, but, ignorant as to those with whom I am destined to live, and also as to what will become of me, I have no wish to sever relations which may become indispensable, and I must not adopt habits that are too individual. My arrangements will therefore be made in accordance with the places that I am in, but in such a manner that I shall not estrange from me any of those who can be said to be one of ourselves.

My fortune is not considerable, and otherwise I should scarcely introduce into an Alpine valley any misplaced luxuries; such scenes consort with the simplicity that I like, not that excesses are unknown there, or even fanciful wants. Perhaps it can scarcely be said that the country is itself simple, but it suits simplicity. Ease of circumstance is pleasanter there than elsewhere, and luxury is less attractive. Many natural things are not as yet ridiculous. It is not a place that should be chosen if one is reduced to a pittance, but any one who has just enough is better off there than elsewhere.

I am consequently making my plans as if I were fairly certain of passing my life therein, and I shall establish in all things a method of living such as circumstances indicate. After I have provided for necessities my remaining income will not exceed eight thousand livres per annum, but this will be sufficient, and will embarrass me less than double the sum in an ordinary place, or four times the amount in a large town.

LETTER LXVI

July 19 (VIII).

Those who dislike a change of servants should be satisfied with one whom custom will let them make use of pretty much as they will. My own accommodates himself very fairly to my requirements. If I am indifferently fed,

he is satisfied in this respect to be a little better off than his master; if, beds being wanting, I have recourse for the night to some hay without undressing, he makes shift after the same manner, and does not render me too sensible of his condescension, which, in turn, I do not abuse, and have therefore had a mattress procured for him.

For the rest, it suits me to have a person about me who is independent of me, strictly speaking. People who can do nothing on their own initiative, and are forced, naturally and by inaptitude, to owe everything to another, are too difficult to deal with. Never having acquired anything as the result of their own efforts, they have had no opportunity to learn the value of things or to undergo voluntary privations, and hence all these are hateful to them. They do not distinguish between penury and reasonable economy, or between a sordid condition and the momentary discomfort imposed by circumstances; hence their wants are so much the less limited, because without you they could aspire to nothing. Leave them to themselves and they will scarcely earn coarse bread; take them under your charge and they despise vegetables, butcher's meat is too common and water disagrees with their constitution.

Here I am at last in my own domicile, and that too in the Alps. Not so many years since this would have been a great happiness; now it is merely a pleasure that I have found something to do. I have engaged workmen from La Gruyère to build me a wooden house, with stoves after the fashion of the country. I have started by raising a spacious roof covered with *ancelles* to connect the barn with the house, and having the wood-house and the well beneath it. At the present moment this answers for the common workshop, while some shanties have been hastily knocked up wherein we pass the night, so long as the clemency of the season permits it. In this way the builders are not

inconvenienced, and the work advances the quicker. They make their kitchen in common, so here I am at the head of a midget state, at once industrious and united. Hantz, my prime minister, does not disdain to eat with the workmen occasionally. I have led him to understand that, although he is the intendant of my buildings, in order to be loved by my people he must in no sense despise persons of free condition, peasants and craftsmen, considering that the philosophy of the age may give them sufficient assurance to term him a valet.

If you have a moment to spare, let me have your ideas as to any details which may occur to you, so that in arranging things for a considerable time to come, perhaps even for life, I may do nothing which I shall have to alter subsequently.

Write to me at Imenstrôm, near Vevey.

LETTER LXVII

IMENSTRÔM, *July* ~~24~~ 21 (VIII).

My hermitage is not illuminated by the morning rays at any season, and save in the winter it scarcely beholds the setting sun. About the summer solstice there is no twilight, and the dawn is perceptible only some three hours after it has appeared on the horizon. It is then visible between the straight stems of the pine trees hard by a bare summit soaring higher than the sun into heaven, but whereon its light is thrown; it seems borne upon the breast of the torrent, above the fall thereof; with surpassing brilliance its beams are broken over the black wood; its luminous disc sleeps upon the wild and umbrageous mountain while the slopes are still in shadow; it shows like the glittering eye of some swarthy colossus.

But it is most at the approaches of the equinox that the

evenings will be wonderful and truly deserving of a younger eye. The gorge of Imenstrôm descends opening towards the winter sunset, the southern slope will be in darkness, while this which looks towards the south, and of which I have taken possession, all glorified with the splendour of the setting sun, will behold that sun quenched in the vast lake emblazoned by the fires thereof. Then will my deep valley be as a refuge of equable temperature between the burning plain exhausted by the long glare, and the frozen snow of the summits which stand round it to the east.

I have seventy roods of very fair meadow-land, twenty of excellent woodland and nearly thirty-five more of which the surface is part rock, part wet and shady marshland, and the remainder covered with either thin or impenetrable woodland. This portion will yield practically no produce; it is essentially a barren tract from which no other advantage is derived than the pleasure of enclosing it as one's own, and of being able at will to arrange it to one's own liking.

What pleases me best in this property, outside its situation, is that it is very compact, and can be included in a common enclosure. It contains, moreover, no fields and no vineyard. Possibly the vine might answer if the timber were cleared; once upon a time there would seem to have been actually a vineyard, which has now been replaced by chestnut trees, and these I prefer very much.

Wheat answers badly; rye, it is said, would do well, but would serve only as an article of exchange, and for this purpose cheeses would be more convenient. It is my ambition to simplify all household toils and cares, thus ensuring order and the least possible embarrassment.

On this account I have no desire for vines, as they entail great labour, and though I would have a man occupied, I would not have him overburdened. Their produce, furthermore, is too irregular and uncertain, and

I prefer to know my possibilities and resources. Nor do I care for fields, because the work which they entail is unequal, while hailstorms, and here especially the frosts of the month of May, too easily injure the harvest, and, lastly, their aspect is, generally speaking, either disagreeable or indifferent to me.

Pasture, woodland and fruit—these are all that I ask for, especially in this country. Unfortunately, fruit is scanty at Imenström. This is a serious drawback; long waiting is indispensable for the enjoyment of the trees which are planted by one's self, and I, who like to be in security as to the future while yet counting only on the present, have no great fancy for waiting. As here there was no house, so also there were no fruit trees, except some chestnuts and very old plum trees, which apparently go back to the period when the vineyard was in existence, and so also, doubtless, something in the way of habitations. The ground indeed appears to have been broken up into several holdings, but subsequent to their unification it has served as pasturage for cows going up to the mountains in spring and coming down for the winter.

This autumn and the spring following I shall plant a good many apples and wild cherries, with some pears and some plums. As regards other fruit trees, I prefer to dispense with them, for they could be obtained only with difficulty. I conclude that one is tolerably well off with the native products of any given place, and that the pains which are involved in securing what a climate will afford only with trouble, cost more than such things are worth.

For a similar reason I shall make no pretence to secure everything that might be held necessary, or for which I could find a use. There is much that it will be better to obtain by the way of exchange. In a large domain

I do not, of course, disapprove of making everything on the spot—linen, bread, wine; of having pigs in the yard, turkeys, peacocks, guinea-fowl, rabbits—whatsoever, under good management, might prove advantageous. But I have observed, with some astonishment, those squalid and ill-regulated households where, with a view to an economy which is always precarious and often burdensome, a hundred anxieties, a hundred occasions of bad temper, a hundred opportunities for loss are indiscriminately adopted. All rural occupations are useful, but most of them only when they can be arranged easily on a somewhat considerable scale. Otherwise it is far better to stick to a special avocation, and see to that thoroughly. By simplification the routine is rendered more easy, the mind is less restless, servants are more faithful and domestic life is much pleasanter.

Could I make annually a hundred pieces of linen, I might entertain the notion of the connected inconvenience in my home; but for the sake of a few ells shall I start sowing hemp and flax, be at all the pains of steeping the raw material, picking it, employing spinners, sending, I know not where, to have it made into linen, and elsewhere still for its bleaching? If everything were carefully calculated —losses, peculations, work ill done, indirect costs—all taken into account, I am convinced that I should find my linen unusually costly. In place of this, I select it as I please, independently of all such care. I pay only what it is actually worth, because I purchase a quantity at a time from a store. In addition to this, I do not change my merchants, like workmen or domestics, except when it is impossible to do otherwise, and this, whatever may be argued, occurs rarely when selection has been made with the intention of not altering, and when a man on his own part does that which is just for their satisfaction.

LETTER LXVIII

IMENSTRÔM, *July* 23 (VIII).

The same idea has occurred to both of us as regards my new asylum. I confess that a moderate degree of cold is to me as objectionable as a very great degree of heat. I detest north winds and snow; from the earliest times my inclinations turned towards those pleasant climates where winter is unknown, and at one time I thought it, so to speak, absurd for any one to live at Archangel or Yeniseick. I have still a difficulty in realising that commerce and the arts can be pursued in some lost place near the Pole, where during so long a season all liquids are solid, the earth is in a state of petrification, and the outward air mortal. It is the north which appears to me uninhabitable; as for the torrid zone I cannot understand why it was so regarded by the ancients. Its sands are sterile undoubtedly, but one cannot help feeling that regions which are otherwise well watered must be more suitable to man, making his needs few, and ministering with the products of a plentiful and continuous vegetation to the one absolute want which he experiences. Snow it is said has its advantages, and this is certain, for it fertilises ground which is naturally wanting in fertility; but I should prefer places which are productive by nature, or can be rendered so by other means. Snow has also its beauties, and this must be the case, for beauty is to be found in all things when they are considered under all their aspects; the beauties of snow are, however, the last which I should personally discover.

But now that independent life is for me only as a forgotten dream, now that I should perhaps seek nothing but to remain unmoved so long as hunger, cold, or wearines not compel me to activity, I begin to judge cli

flectively rather than sentimentally. For, passing the time as I best can in my room, the frozen sky of the Samoiedes does as well as the mild heaven of Ionia. What I might have most reason to fear would possibly be the unvarying fine weather of hot countries, where the oldest inhabitant has only seen rain a dozen times. Fine days are very convenient, but in spite of the cold, the mists and the melancholy I can better tolerate the weariness of the bad weather than the weariness of the beautiful season.

I do not sleep so well as I used to, and the restlessness of the nights, combined with the desire for repose, make me think of the insect scourges which torment men in tropical countries, and even in the summer season of several northern regions. The deserts are no longer for me; the needs created by convention have become my natural needs. Of what consequence to me is the independence of man? I require money, and with money I can be as well off at St. Petersburg as at Naples. In the north man is subjugated by necessities and by obstacles; in the south he is enslaved by indolence and pleasure. In the north the destitute person has no asylum; he is naked, cold, hungry, and Nature for him is no less terrible than the almshouse or the prison. At the equator he has forests, and Nature may suffice him so long as man is absent. There at least he can find an asylum from misery and oppression; but for myself, bound as I am by my habits and my destiny, I am forbidden to travel so far. I seek but a convenient cell where I can breathe, sleep, remain in the warmth, walk up and down, and keep account of my expenses. It is much therefore to have built one hard by an overhanging and frowning rock, hard by a foaming torrent, things which remind me from time to time that I might have done differently.

Notwithstanding, I must own that I did think of Lugano, and even had a mind to see it, but this I have renounced.

The climate is temperate; you are spared on the one hand the intense heat of the Italian plains, and, on the other, the rough alternations and excessive cold of the Alps. Snow falls there rarely, and does not remain when it falls. There are said to be lovely olive trees, and the scenery is beautiful; at the same time it is an out-of-the-way corner. More even than this do I fear the Italian manner, and when, over and above that, I remember its stone-built houses I cease to trouble about it. It meant practically giving up Switzerland. Chessel I should have liked far better, and that is where I ought to be, but it does not seem that I can. I have been led here by a power which is perhaps only the result of my first dreams of Switzerland, yet it seems of another order. Lugano has a lake, but a lake could be no adequate reason for leaving you.

That part of Switzerland where I have fixed my abode has become, so to speak, my country, or at least, it is like a country where I have passed happy years at the first period of my life. I dwell here now with indifference, and this is a great proof of my misfortune, yet I think that it would be ill with me elsewhere. This lovely basin which forms the eastern end of Lake Leman, so vast, so romantic, so finely surrounded; these wooden houses, these châlets, these kine which come and go, carrying their mountain bells; the facilities of the plains and the proximity of the high peaks; a kind of manner which is English, French and Swiss; one language that I know, another which is my own, and a third, more seldom heard, that I do not understand; a tranquil variety which all this helps to impart; a certain union little known among Catholics; the mildness of a region which looks westward and is sheltered from the north; the long expanse of rounded water, prolonged, indefinite, with far-off vapours exhaling under the noonday sun, or flaming in the lights of evening; where night makes audible the waves which

form, flow up, gather and widen out to be lost upon the margin where I am resting—all this sustains man in a situation which he does not find elsewhere. I can scarcely be said to enjoy it, and yet I should find difficulty in dispensing with it. I should be a stranger in other places; I might look for more picturesque scenery, and when I compare with external things the impotence and nothingness of my life, I might know what to complain of; here I can attribute it only to vague desires and elusive needs. I must, therefore, seek in myself those resources which may be there without my knowing it, and if my impatience is without remedy, my uncertainty is at least indefinite.

I must confess that I like to possess even when I cannot enjoy: whether the vanity of things, leaving me no room for further hope, inspires me with a sadness which is suitable to the bent of my thought; whether, having no other enjoyment to expect, I find a certain sweetness amidst a bitterness which does not exactly cause suffering, but leaves the soul discouraged in the repose of a painful effeminacy. So much indifference for things attractive by themselves and once desired, sad evidence of the insatiable hunger of our hearts, still flatters their disquiet; it appears to the ingenuity of their ambition a mark of our superiority over that which is sought by men, and over all things which Nature has granted us as sufficiently great for man.

I could wish to be familiar with the whole earth, not indeed to see it, but to have once seen it; life is too short for me to overcome my natural indolence. I who dread the smallest journey, and sometimes even a simple removal, shall I set myself to scour the wide world so as to obtain, if by chance I come back, the rare advantage of knowing, two or three years before my end, some few things which would be useless to me? Let him undertake

voyages who can reckon on his means, who prefers novel sensations, who anticipates success or enjoyment from that which he does not know, for whom to travel is to live. I am not a man of arms, a merchant, or a sightseer, nor yet a learned person, nor a man who has systems; I am a poor observer of even everyday things, and I should come back from the farthest end of the world with nothing that was of any use to my country. At the same time I could have wished to have seen the world and to have returned to my hermitage, with the certainty of never leaving it; I am fit only to end my days in peace. You will remember, no doubt, that once when we were speaking of the way that time was passed on board ship, with pipe, punch and playing cards, I, who detest cards, who do not smoke, and drink very little, made no other answer than to get my feet into my slippers, lead you into the breakfast-room, shut down the window quickly, and start walking up and down with you over the carpet near the hob where the kettle was boiling. And you still speak to me about travelling! I repeat to you that I am only fit to end my days managing my house in mediocrity, simplicity, comfort, so that my friends may be contented therein. About what else should I disquiet myself, and why should I pass my life in making preparations for living? Yet a few summers, yet a few winters, and your friend, the great traveller, will be a handful of ashes. You will remind him that he ought to be useful, and this is indeed his hope, for he will furnish some few ounces of earth to the earth from which he came, only trusting that it will be in Europe.

If other things were possible to me, I should set myself to their performance, I should regard them as a duty, and that might stimulate me a little; but, as far as I am concerned myself, there is nothing that I wish to do. If I

can contrive not to be alone in my wood-built house, if I can contrive that all therein shall approach happiness, it will be said that I am a useful man, though personally I believe nothing of the kind. It is not being useful to do with money what money can do everywhere, and to improve the condition of two or three persons when there are men who either lose or save myriads of their kind. However this may be, I shall feel some contentment in seeing contentment about me. In my isolated room I shall forget all the rest; I shall become as narrow as my destiny, and may perhaps even get to believe that my valley is an essential part of the world.

What then would be the use of my having seen the globe, and why should I desire to see it? I must try to tell you in order to know myself. In the first place, you are right in thinking that regret for not having seen it affects me very little. Had I a thousand years to live I would start to-morrow. As this is not the case, the narratives of Cook, Norden, and Pallas tell me anything about other countries that I can have any need to know. But if I had seen them, I should compare one sensation with another of the same order under another sky; I should perhaps see a little more clearly into the relations between man and things, and, as it is necessary for me to write because I have nothing else to do, I might perhaps be able to say things that were less useless.

Dreaming alone, with no light, on some rainy evening by a good fire settling slowly into ashes, I should like to say to myself: I have seen the sands, the seas, the mountains. I have seen capitals and deserts. I have seen nights in the tropics and nights in the polar regions. I have seen the Southern Cross and the Little Bear. I have endured heat at 145 degrees and cold at 130. I have traversed snows at the equator and beheld the flush of day incarnadine

the pine trees within the Arctic circle. I have compared the simple outlines of Caucasus with the rugged Alps, and the forests of Mount Felix with the bare granite of the Thebaid. I have seen Ireland always humid and Lybia always arid; I have known the long winter of Edinburgh without suffering from cold; I have seen the camels frozen in Abyssinia. I have ground pepper; I have taken opium; I have drunk ava; I have sojourned in a small village where they would have cooked me if they did not think that I was poison, then among a people who adored me because I arrived there in one of those globes in which Europeans amuse themselves. I have seen the Esquimaux content with bad fish and whale oil. I have seen the merchant dissatisfied with his wines of Cyprus and Constance. I have seen the free man pursuing the bear for a hundred leagues and the tradesman eat, grow fat, weigh out his merchandise, and wait for extreme unction in the sombre shop where his mother drew trade before him. A mandarin's daughter dies of shame because her husband sees one of her feet uncovered an hour too soon; in the Pacific two girls mount on the bridge and, covered by a single garment, advance among the foreign sailors, lead them to land, and are delighted at the sight of a vessel. The savage kills himself with despair before the destroyer of his friend; the true believer sells the woman who loved, saved and nourished him, and secures a higher price because he has made her a mother.

But when I had seen these things and many others, when I could say that I had seen them—O men deceived and made for deception, do you not know them? Are you less fanatical in your narrow ideas? Have you less reason to be so that some small decency may remain to you?

No, it is but a dream; it is far better to buy oil wholesale, to sell it retail and make two sous per pound. What I

could say to the thinking man would not have much higher authority. Our books may suffice to the impartial man, and all the experience of the globe is in our libraries. He who has seen nothing for himself, but is without prejudice, knows more than many travellers. No doubt if a man of this upright mind, if such an observer, had scoured the world, he would know still more, but the difference would not be enough to be essential. He can discern in the remarks of others the things which they themselves have not noticed, but which he would have seen in their place.

If Anacharsis, Pythagoras, Democritus lived now, it is probable that they would not have travelled, because everything has been divulged; the secret science is no longer hidden in a particular place, there are no longer any unknown manners, any extraordinary institutions, and it is no longer indispensable to go abroad. Were it necessary to see everything by itself, now that the earth is so great and knowledge so complicated, all life would be insufficient for the multiplicity of things which it would be necessary to study, or for the number of places to be visited. We no longer journey these great distances because their object, grown too vast, has passed beyond the faculty and even the hope of man; how, therefore, should they be suited to my limited faculty or to my extinguished hope?

What more shall I say to you? The servant who tends her cows, who lets her milk stand, who removes the cream and churns it, knows well that she is making butter. When she serves it, sees that it is spread with satisfaction over the bread, and that more tea is placed in the teapot because the butter is good, she feels that her pains are repaid; her toil is beautiful to her because she has done what she wished. But when a man seeks that which is just and useful, does he know what he will produce, or whether he will produce anything?

Truly this gorge of Imenstrôm is a place full of tranquillity, where above me I see only the black fir-tree, the bare rock, the infinite sky, and far down stretches the earth which is tilled by man.

In other ages the duration of life used to be reckoned by the number of spring-tides, and as one, to whom it is necessary that his wooden roof should become like that of the man of old, I shall thus reckon what remains to me by the number of times that you come here to pass, according to your promise, one month of each year in my company.

LETTER LXIX

IMENSTRÔM, *July* 27 (VIII).

I learn with much satisfaction that M. de Fonsalbe has returned from St. Domingo; but he is said to be a ruined man, and more than that, he is married. I hear, further, that he has business at Zurich, and must repair thither speedily.

Advise him to take this place on his way; he will be well received. Warn him, notwithstanding, that, in other respects, he must look for indifferent cheer. Such things matter little to him, I believe, unless he has changed much; his is an excellent heart. Does a good heart ever change?

I should obtrude but very slight sympathy over the demolition of his home by a hurricane, or the destruction of his prospects, if he were not married; but as things are, I commiserate him greatly. If his wife be a wife in truth it will be deplorable for him to see her anything except happy; if he be accompanied only by a wo who bears his name, he will have a full share of mortifications from which easy circumstances al

offer an escape. I have failed to hear whether or not he has children.

Make him promise to take Vevey on his way, and to stay here for several days. The brother of Madame Dellemar may well be cut out for me. A hope inspires me. Tell me something about him — you who know him better. Felicitate his sister on his escape from the last misfortune of the passage home. Yet, no—say nothing to her as from me; suffer the past to perish.

But advise me when he will come, and tell me in our own language what you think of his wife. I trust that she accompanies him on his journey; in a sense, it is even necessary. That this is the time of all others for visiting Switzerland is a pretext which will serve you to determine them. Should there be any question of embarrassment or expense, assure her that she can remain comfortably and becomingly at Vevey, while he concludes his business at Zurich.

LETTER LXX

IMENSTRÖM, *July* 29 (VIII).

Though my last letter was despatched only the day before yesterday, I am writing to you again, without, I must confess, having anything special to tell you. Should both communications come to hand together, do not assume that there is anything urgent in this one; I forewarn you that it carries no news, unless indeed that it has become suddenly winter here, which will at once account for my writing, and for the fact that I am spending the afternoon by the fire. Snow clothes the mountains, the clouds hang low, an icy rain is deluging the valleys; it is cold even by the shore of the lake; at mid-day it

was only five degrees above freezing-point, and it was under two a little before sunrise.

I do not dislike these winters in miniature supervening in the heart of summer. Within given limits, variation is good even for regular people, for those even who are ruled by their habits. Some organs become fatigued by incessant action. Just now I am thoroughly enjoying the fire, whereas it irritates me in the winter, and I go away from it.

Vicissitudes of the kind which we are experiencing, more sudden and more marked than in the plains, render the inconvenient temperature of the mountains, to some extent, of greater interest. A dog is not most attached to that master who feeds him well and allows him abundance of rest, but to the one who corrects and caresses, scolds and pardons him. An irregular, stormy, uncertain climate becomes a necessary minister to our restless mood, while one that is more accommodating and regular, though it contents, yet leaves us indifferent.

Possibly the equable days, the cloudless sky, the perpetual summer are more stimulating to the imagination of the multitude, because then the prime needs of humanity monopolise less of their time, and people are more uniform in those regions where there is less diversity in seasons, forms and all else. But places which are full of contrarieties, the extremes of beauty and terror, where opposite situations and swift sensations are experienced, uplift the imagination of certain temperaments towards the romantic, the mysterious, the ideal.

Pastures that are invariably temperate may produce profound scholars; sands that are scorched for ever may boast ascetics and gymnosophists. But mountainous Greece, cold and mild, severe and smiling, the Greece of snow and of olive trees, had Orpheus, Homer, Epi-

menides; Caledonia, more inhospitable, more variable, more polar and less favoured, gave us Ossian.

When the trees, the floods, the clouds are peopled by the souls of ancestors, the spirits of heroes, by dryads and divinities; when viewless beings are bound in caverns or driven before the winds, when they wander among silent tombs, when their moans fill the air during the darksome night—what a fatherland for the heart of man! what a world for eloquence!

Beneath a sky which never changes, on some boundless plain, tall palm trees are shading the banks of a vast and soundless river, and there sits the Mussulman on his cushions, smoking the whole day amidst fans waved about him.

But moss-grown rocks project over an abyss of rising waves; through a long winter the dense mist has cut them off from the world; now the sky is lovely, the violet and the strawberry are in bloom, the days lengthen, the forests awake. On the tranquil ocean the daughters of warriors chant the victories and the hope of the fatherland. See the clouds gathering; the sea chafes, the bolt shatters the æonian oak, ships are swallowed up, the snow covers the heights, floods overwhelm the cabin and open out the precipices. The wind changes; the sky is clear and cold. Floating planks may be seen by the light of the stars on the still threatening sea; the daughters of the warriors are no more. The winds die down, there is calm everywhere; human voices are heard above the rocks, and cold drops distil from the caves. The Caledonian arms, he starts forth in the night, he crosses mountains and torrents, he flies to Fingal, crying to him: "Slisama is dead, but I have heard her voice. She will not depart from us. She has called thy friends; she has bade us go forth to conquer."

The heroism of enthusiasm and the titanic dreams of a sublime melancholy seem native to the North; to the

South belong austere conceptions, mystic reveries, impenetrable dogmas, secret, magical, cabalistic sciences, and the intense enthusiasms of hermits.

The admixture of races and the complexity of causes, whether connected with climate or foreign thereto, by which the temperament of man is modified, have furnished specious arguments against the great influence of climates. For the rest it would seem that no one has done more than glance at the means and effects of this influence. Regard has been paid only to the greater or lesser heat, which, so far from being the sole cause, is not perhaps even the chief.

Were it possible that the sum of yearly heat were the same in Norway and in Hejaz, the difference would still be very great, it may be as great as ever, between Arab and Norwegian. The one is acquainted only with an unvaried Nature, equality in days, permanence in season and the burning uniformity of a barren land. The other, after a long series of dense mists and frost-bound earth, of congealed waters and a heaven riven by the winds, beholds a new season illuminate the sky periodically, restore life to the waters, and fructify an earth bursting everywhere into blossom and embellished by harmonious hues and romantic sounds. Hours of inexpressible beauty are found in spring; autumn has days rendered still more alluring by the very sadness which imbues without distracting the soul, which, instead of rending it with false delight, permeates and nourishes it with a rapture which is full of mystery, of grandeur and of weariness.

Possibly the diverse aspects of the earth and the heavens, and the permanence or mobility of the accidents of Nature, can impress only well-organised men, and cannot reach that multitude which, either through incapacity or mise
seem condemned to know only the animal ins
men of wider faculties are the men who lead t

those who, by institutions, by example, by open or secret forces, carry away the crowd, and the crowd itself in many ways responds to these impulsions, although it does not observe them.

Among such causes one of the palmary is indubitably in the atmosphere with which we are penetrated. The vegetable and terrestrial emanations and exhalations change with the culture of the ground and with other circumstances, when even the temperature is not sensibly modified. Hence, when it is proved that the inhabitants of a given country have become modified in the absence of a corresponding climatic alteration, it seems to me that a substantial objection has not been alleged, for the argument is only as to temperature, and at the same time the air of one place must seldom suit the inhabitants of another, though the summers and winters appear similar.

Moral and political causes operate at first more powerfully than the influence of climate; they have an immediate and rapid effect which overcomes physical causes, though the latter, being more durable, are more potent in the end. No one is surprised that the Parisians have changed since the period when Julian wrote his *Misopogon*. In place of the old Parisian character the force of circumstances has substituted one which is blended of the dwellers in a very large unmaritime town with that of the Picards, the Normans, the Champenois, the Tourangeaux, the Gascons, the French in general, Europeans even, and finally the subjects of a monarchy which has been ameliorated in its external forms.

LETTER LXXI

IMENSTRÔM, *August* 3 (VIII).

If there be one thing in the pageant of the world which strikes me from time to time, and from time to time astonishes me, it is that being who to us appears the end of so many means, and would yet seem the means to no end; who is all on earth and yet for earth as nothing, while he is nothing also for himself; who searches, combines, distresses himself; who remakes and yet does the new things invariably after the same manner, and those things which are everlastingly the same with a hope that is ever new; whose nature is activity, or rather the unrest of activity; who exerts himself to find what he seeks, but torments himself still more when he has nothing to seek for; who in that which he attains sees only a means to the attainment of something different, and amidst the fruition of his joy finds in that which he desired only new strength to strive after what he did not want previously; who would covet what he once dreaded rather than have nothing to expect further; whose greatest misfortune would be the absence of all opportunity of suffering; whom obstacles enchant, whom pleasures oppress, who loves rest only when he has lost it; and, hurried from illusions to illusions, has and can look for nothing beyond them; who has known, in fine, no more of life than its dream.

LETTER LXXII

IMENSTRÔM, *August* 6 (VI

I am scarcely surprised that your friends blame
burying myself in an isolated and unknown pla
was not only to be expected, but I must agree

that my tastes seem contradictory at times. I think all the same that the opposition is more apparent than real, and will be observable by those only who credit me with a decided bias towards a rural life. My attraction is by no means exclusively towards what is termed living in the country, nor do I dislike the town. I know well enough which of the two lives I prefer naturally, but I should be puzzled to decide which of them suits me altogether at this moment.

As regards the mere question of some place to settle down in, most towns I should find uncongenial, yet there are perhaps none that I should not prefer to the country as I have seen it in many provinces. If I tried to picture the situation which suited me best, it would not be in a town; still, I give no decided preference to the country. Although for any one in unfavourable circumstances existence may be more tolerable in the latter, I consider that with adequate means there is fuller opportunity in large towns for living comfortably according to the possibilities of the place. The whole question is therefore subject to so many exceptions that I am unable to offer any general decision concerning it. What I like is not this or that definitely and exclusively, but what seems to me nearest to perfection in its own way and most fully in harmony with its own nature.

I should prefer the existence of a miserable Finlander amidst his frozen rocks to that which is led by innumerable small burgesses of certain towns, wherein, wholly circumscribed by their customs, pallid with discontent, and living like mere animals, they hold themselves superior to the careless and robust being who vegetates in the country and laughs through all his Sundays.

I am well enough pleased with a small town when it is clean, nicely placed, and tastefully built, with a park pleasantly laid out as a public promenade in place of insipid

boulevards; where there is a broad walk in which beautiful fountains play, where people who may be neither out of the common nor celebrated, nor even highly educated, but are yet right thinking and not devoid of wit, can assemble, although in small numbers, and be glad to meet; in a word, a small town where there is the least possible amount of misery, meanness, discord, scandal, homespun piety and calumny.

But better still I like the great town which combines all the advantages and attractions of human industry; where polished manners and enlightened minds are found; where, amidst the vast population, one may expect to meet with a friend and to form desirable acquaintances; where one can be lost, if need be, in the crowd, be at once respected, untrammelled and unnoticed, following the bent of one's inclination or changing it unobtrusively; where everything can be chosen and arranged and adopted with no other judges than the persons who truly know us. Paris is the capital which unites all town-advantages in the highest degree, and hence, though I have most probably quitted it for ever, I cannot be surprised that so many persons of taste and sensibility prefer it to any other abode.

If unfitted for the occupations of the country, one is alien therein, the requisite faculties are wanting for the life that has been chosen, and we are conscious that we should have done better in another condition, though, at the same time, we might have appreciated or approved it less. Rural pursuits are necessary for a rural life, and they can scarcely be adopted when youth is no longer ours. We need arms capable of toil, we must take interest in planting, grafting and haymaking with our own hands, and we must be fond of hunting or fishing. Otherwise we are out of our element, and likely to say to ourselves: "At Paris I should experience no such discomfort; my habits would be in conformity

with my environment, though neither might harmonise with my real tastes." Thus our place in the order of the world is lost when we have been separated from it too long. Our disposition and our affections are denaturalised by fixed habits contracted in youth, and should it come to pass in the end that we become wholly free, we can choose no longer as we ought, except approximately; nothing, henceforward, is wholly suitable.

At Paris one is well off for a time, but not, as it seems to me, for all life, nor does it appear man's nature to dwell everlastingly among the bricks, between the tiles and the mud, cut off from the majestic scenes of Nature. The elegances of society are by no means devoid of value; our fancies are carried away by their distraction. At the same time they do not fill the soul, nor compensate for all that has been lost. Society cannot satisfy him who has no other resource in the town, who is not deceived by the promises of an empty clamour and is acquainted with the misery of pleasures.

Undoubtedly, if there be one truly satisfactory condition, it is that of a land-holder who, devoid of other cares, free of profession or passions, tranquil in an agreeable domain, manages prudently his estate, his house, his family and himself, and, disassociated from the success and bitterness of the world, seeks only to enjoy day by day recurring and simple pleasures, that sweet but enduring joy which every day can renew.

With a wife who is similarly disposed, with one or two children, one intimate friend and, in fine, with health, an adequate estate pleasantly situated, and the spirit of order, we have all the felicity which a wise man can cherish in his heart. Some of these advantages are mine, but he who has ten wants falls short of happiness when nine only are fulfilled; such is man, and so is he necessarily constituted.

Complaint would ill become me, and yet am I remote from felicity.

I do not in any sense regret Paris, but I remember a conversation which I once had with a distinguished officer who had just retired from active service and taken up his abode in that city. I was at the house of M. T., towards evening. There were other visitors, but they went down into the garden and remained there, while beer was brought up to us. Subsequently our host left us and I remained alone with the officer in question. Certain parts of our talk have become fixed in my memory. How we came upon the subject, and whether the beer after dinner accounted for our loquacity, I cannot say; however it may be, here is what took place almost literally. You will observe in due course that my interlocutor was a man who never calculated on growing tired of amusing himself, nor could he be deceived in this respect because he claimed to subordinate his very amusements to an order peculiar to himself, and thus render them the instruments of a species of passion which will end only with him. Finding his views remarkable, and having a clear recollection of them next morning, I wrote them down to preserve among my notes. I enclose them herewith; indolence prevents me from copying them, but you will return them later on.

"I wanted a profession and I had one. I found that it led to no good, at least in my case. I found further that there was but one external thing which was worth troubling about, and that is money. It is a necessity, and it is no less good to possess it in sufficiency than it is essential not to seek for it immoderately. Gold is a power, it represents every faculty of man, since it opens all paths and entitles to all enjoyments; nor do I see that it is less useful to the good man than to the voluptuary, if he would fulfil his objects. Like others, I have been duped by the re-

for observation and knowledge, which I have carried too far. I have learned with a deal of labour many things which were useless to human reason, and these I forget from henceforth. I will not deny that there is a certain pleasure in such forgetfulness, but I have paid for it too high a price. I have travelled somewhat, I have lived in Italy, I have crossed Russia, I have even had a glimpse of China. These journeys wearied me not a little, but when I had done with business I desired to travel for pleasure. Foreigners spoke only of your Alps, and I explored them as others have done."

"You were compensated for the dulness of the Russian steppes."

"I ascertained the colour of the snow in summer, the hardness of the Alpine granite, the rapidity of the waterfalls, and a number of similar things."

"But seriously, you were dissatisfied with the experience, and have brought away no agreeable memory, no memorable observation?"

"I know the shape of the copper pans in which they make cheeses, and am qualified to pronounce on the accuracy of the topographical pictures of Switzerland. I can recognise when the artists have given play to their fancy, as they do frequently. What matters it to me if rocks hurled by a certain number of men have crashed down on a greater number who chanced to be underneath? If the snow and the north-east wind prevail for nine months in the meadows where such an astonishing occurrence took place formerly, I shall not select them for my asylum now. I am gratified to learn that a considerable number of people earn bread and beer in Amsterdam by discharging casks of coffee, but as for me, I can get good coffee elsewhere without breathing the evil air of Holland and without being frozen at Hamburg. Every country has its good points, and it is argued that there

are fewer bad ones at Paris than at any other place. I do not pretend to decide, but my ways consort with Paris, and there I shall remain. With good sense and a competence we can suit ourselves wherever sociable beings exist. Our heart, our head and our purse do more for our happiness than places. I have met with monstrous licentiousness in the deserts of the Volga; I have found ridiculous pretensions in the humble valleys of the Alps. At Astrakan, at Lausanne, at Naples man groans, even as at Paris; he laughs at Paris as he does at Lausanne or Naples. Everywhere the poor suffer and the rest torment themselves. It is true that Parisian amusements are not altogether the way in which I should wish to see the people amused, but it must be admitted also that I should fail elsewhere to find more agreeable society or a more convenient mode of life. I have abandoned those fantasies which absorb time inordinately as well as resources. I have only one dominant taste, or, if you will, one craze remaining, of which I am never likely to be quit, as there is nothing chimerical about it, and it does not occasion serious embarrassment for an empty end. I like to get the best return for my time, my money and my entire being. The passion for order occupies more fully and produces more than other passions, while it sacrifices nothing to utter loss. Happiness is less costly than are pleasures."

"Granted! But of what kind of happiness are we speaking? To spend the days in play, dining, talking of the latest actress—all this may be pleasant enough, as you point out so well, but such a life will by no means constitute happiness for persons of great ambition."

"You are in search of powerful sensations and extreme emotions; it is the thirst of a generous soul and at your age may still mislead. As for myself, I care little to be in admiration for an hour and in weariness for a week; I

prefer rather a frequent diversion with no weariness. My way of living does not fatigue me, because I combine it with order, and to this order I adhere."

Such is my version of our conversation, which lasted a full hour in the same strain. I confess that if he did not reduce me to silence, he at least gave me material in plenty for reflection.

LETTER LXXIII

IMENSTRÔM, *September* (VIII).

You leave me to inexpressible solitude. With whom shall I abide when you are roaming beyond the seas? Now, indeed, I am about to be alone. You assure me that this will be no protracted voyage; it is possible, but shall I gain much by your return? The new functions which engross you unceasingly have made you forget my mountains and the promise which you gave me. Did you think Bordeaux so very near to the Alps?

I shall not attempt writing until your return. I have no relish for those speculative letters which reach the intended recipient by chance only, while an answer cannot come to hand till at least three months have elapsed and may not arrive for a year. As to myself, having no intention of departing from hence, I shall hope to hear from you on your voyage.

I regret that M. de Fonsalbe has business to finish at Hamburg before he can transact that at Zurich, but as he foresees that the former will be prolonged, possibly the inclement season will be over before he reaches Switzerland. So you can arrange matters accordingly, just as they were planned for the autumn. Be sure that you do not start till he has promised decisively to make a stay here of at least several days.

Judge whether this is of moment to me. Of you I have no hope; leave me some one at least whom you have loved. What you tell me regarding him would give me unbounded satisfaction if I could be affected by plans so remote of fulfilment. I have no longer any wish to believe in the happy issue of uncertainties.

LETTER LXXIV

IMENSTRÔM, *June* 15 (*Ninth Year*).

The arrival of your note has filled me with extravagant joy. Bordeaux for a moment has seemed to me closer to my lake than Port au Prince or L'Ile de Gorée. So your affairs have flourished; this counts for much; it is something for the soul to feed upon when no other nourishment is available.

As for me, I am steeped in profound weariness, which is not, as you know, of my seeking; on the contrary, I would find occupation, and yet I perish of inanition.

It is desirable that I should be as brief as you are. I am at Imenstrôm. I have heard nothing of M. de Fonsalbe, and furthermore, I no longer hope for anything. Notwithstanding. . . . Farewell. *Si vales, bene est.*

June 16.

When I think how you live, at once well employed and tranquil, now finding interest in what you do, and now enjoying those distractions which bring rest, I am on the verge of blaming independence, though I love it all the same. It is undeniable that man stands in ne[illegible] some object to engage him, some controlling infl[illegible] to lead and govern him. At the same time it is a [illegible] advantage to be free, to choose what is suited to [illegible]

means, and to be different from the slave who works unremittingly for another. But I have ample time for testing all the futility and vanity of what I do, and this frigid estimate of the true worth of things is next door to disgust with them all.

You are selling Chessel and purchasing in the neighbourhood of Bordeaux. Must we never meet again? How right you were! For all that, each of us must work out his destiny. It is insufficient to appear contented. I ought to be so, it would seem; and yet I am not happy. When you have attained happiness, send me some Sauterne; till then, I do not wish for it. To you, O good and wise man, whose heart obeys his reason, whom I admire and cannot imitate—to you happiness will come. You know how to use life, but, for me, I await it. I seek the beyond for ever, as if the hours were not lost, as if eternal death were not nearer than my dreams.

LETTER LXXV

IMENSTRÖM, *June* 28 (IX).

I will look forward no longer to better days. The months slip by, the years succeed one another, all renews itself in vain. I continue that which I was. In the midst of all that I desired all is wanting to me. I have acquired nothing, I possess nothing; weariness expends my duration in a lingering silence. Whether the ineffectual anxieties of life constrain me to forget natural things, whether the barren need of enjoyment drives me to their shadow, the void environs me all my days, and each season seems to extend it further about me. No friendship consoled my weariness through the long sea-mists of the winter. Spring comes for Nature, but for me it arrives not. The season of quickening reawakens all existence, its

invincible fire exhausts without reanimating me; I have become as an alien in the joyful world. And now the flowers have fallen, the time of the lily is over-passed; the heat increases, days lengthen, and the nights are more lovely. O season of enchantment! But days of beauty to me are useless, the sweet nights to me are bitter. Peace of the deep shadows! Washing of the waves! Silence! Moon! Birds singing in the night-time! Sensations of the early years, what has become of you?

The ghosts remain; they appear before me; they pass, repass, and withdraw, as a cloud changing into a hundred pallid and titanic forms. I seek in vain to enter with tranquillity into the night of the tomb; my eyes refuse to close. These ghosts of life show themselves unceasingly, they disport in silence, they approach and draw back, are swallowed up and reappear; I behold them all and I hear nothing. They are like smoke: I seek them and they are no more. I listen and call, my own voice is not audible, and I dwell in an intolerable emptiness, alone, lost, uncertain, overborne with disquietude and amazement, in the midst of wandering shades, in space impalpable and dumb. Unfathomable Nature! I am overwhelmed by thy splendour and thy very benefits consume me. What for me are these long days? Their light begins too early, their burning noon exhausts me, and the distressing harmony of their heavenly evening consumes the ashes of my heart; the genius which slept beneath its ruins has trembled at the movement of life.

The snows melt upon the mountain crowns; the stormy clouds surge in the valley. Ah, wretched that I am! The heavens kindle, the earth ripens, but sterile winter abides in me. Softened beams of the dying sun! grand shadows of enduring snows! Oh that man should have only embittered joys when the torrent rolls afar in the universal

silence, when the châlets close for the rest of the night, when the moon rises over Vélan.

From the moment that I left behind me that infancy which we all regret, I imagined, I was conscious of a real life, yet I experienced only fantastic sensations. I beheld the beings of the mind, but here are shadows only; I sought after harmony, and found nothing but its antithesis. Then I became a prey to sadness; the void made furrows in my heart, wants with no limit devoured me in silence, and weariness of life became my sole sentiment at the age when most people are beginning to live. Everything bodied forth to me that full, universal felicity, the ideal image of which is graved in the heart of man, while its means, which seem so natural, seem also blotted out from Nature. As yet I toyed merely with unknown sorrows; but when I looked upon the Alps and upon the shores of the lakes, when I was in the presence of the silence of the châlets, of the permanence and the equality of times and of outward things, I recognised the isolated marks of this preconceived Nature. I saw the reflections of the moon upon schists of rock and upon eaves of wood; I beheld men without desires; I roamed over the close-cropped mountain grass; I hearkened to the sound of another world.

Once more I came down to earth, and then the unquestioning faith in absolute existence evaporated—that chimera of harmonious correspondences, perfections, positive delights; that brilliant figment with which the unwithered heart beguiles itself, and at which they smile so woefully who are chilled by a greater profundity or ripened by a later time.

Mutations without term, activity which knows not end, universal impenetrability—such is the limit of our knowledge concerning this world over which we reign.

Some invincible destiny cancels all our dreams, and what does it supply in the space which must yet be filled? Power wearies, delight slips away, glory turns to ashes, religion is a system for the wretched, love once wore the colours of life, but the shadow comes, the rose pales, it falls, and behold it is the eternal night!

Great was our soul notwithstanding; it willed, a task was set it—what has it performed? I have seen unmoved some ancient tree, which had fructified through two centuries, lie prone and death-stricken on the earth. It has nourished living creatures; it has received them into its refuge; it has drunk the moisture of the air, and has subsisted in despite of stormy winds; it perishes amidst other trees born of its fruit. Its destiny is fulfilled; it has obtained that which was promised it; it is no longer; it has once been.

But the sapling set by chance on the marsh-edge! It sprang up wild in its strength and its pride, even as the tree of the forest depths. Superabundant energy! The roots drink up fetid water, they strike into an impure slime, the stem is enfeebled and weary; bowed by the humid winds, its head relaxes repeatedly; its fruits, few and sickly, fall into the slough and there are lost to no purpose. Languishing, misshapen, sere, prematurely old, and already bent over the marsh, it seems to seek the tempest which will uproot it; its life has ceased long before its fall.

LETTER LXXVI

July 2 (IX).

Hantz has shown himself a wise man, and is
with me. At some six leagues from here there
of his who is a well-borer, and, having a nur

to lay, I have got him to come over, and with him also I am well satisfied. He is a discreet and honest man, simple and yet gifted with that quality of confidence which comes from natural abilities and the consciousness of inflexible probity. Though not particularly robust, he is good at his trade, and goes to work well and carefully. He is neither nervous nor officious in my presence, not cringing and not familiar. Moreover, I made personal inquiry in his village to ascertain what was thought of him there, and I even saw his wife.

On my return I directed him to sink a well at a point where at first he could scarcely see how it would be of use to me; and subsequently, while he was completing some other labours, they erected a small peasant's cottage close by it, after the style of the country, containing several rooms on a single floor, together with kitchen, barn and stable, the whole being accommodation enough for a small household, including winter quarters for two cows. Behold himself and his wife installed therein, with the requisite plot of ground and some few things besides! It is true that the conduit-pipes may be wanting for the moment, but my well-sinker will not be wanting. His domicile was prepared in the space of twenty days, for it is one of the advantages of this kind of erection that, given the proper materials, ten men can put it up in a couple of weeks, and there is no need to delay till the plaster dries.

On the twentieth day, as I have said, it was all ready. The evening was fine, and I gave orders for him to strike work a little earlier than usual. I led him up to the cottage and said to him: "This house, with its store of wood, which you can renew annually from my own, these two cows, and the meadow as far as that hedge, are set apart henceforth to your use, and will continue so as long

as you are well conducted, which it is almost impossible for me to doubt that you will be."

Let me now mention two facts by which you may conclude for yourself whether this man deserves all that I have done for him and even more. Feeling, apparently, that the extent of a service should answer adequately for that of the gratitude of an honest heart, he insisted only on the remarkable similarity between all he saw and all that he had ever imagined as the sum of his whole ambition, that which, without any hope of obtaining, he had pictured ever since his marriage, as the supreme good; that which alone he would have asked of Heaven, could he have formulated a petition which deserved to be heard thereby. This will please you, but here is something which will surprise. He has been married for the past eight years, and the couple have been without children; misery has been their sole patrimony, for, burdened with a debt bequeathed to him by his father, the labour of his hands has barely secured the necessities of existence for himself and his wife. The latter is now with child. Consider the few facilities, or even chances, which a condition of habitual penury offers for the development of our faculties, and judge if one could find, among sentiments devoid of ostentation within and without, more of native nobility or of justice.

I count myself exceedingly fortunate that I possess what I do without owing it to a condition by which I should be obliged to live like a rich man, and to waste in frivolities what is capable of bearing so much fruit. I acknowledge, with the moralists, that large possessions are frequently an illusory advantage, and of a kind which too often we render fatal; but I shall never allow them that an independent fortune is not one of the chief means of happiness and even of wisdom.

LETTER LXXVII

July 6 (IX).

In this diversified country, where the incidents of Nature, restricted within a narrow area, are in conflict with forms, products and climates, even the human species is denied an uniform character. Racial differences are more marked here than elsewhere. In these far-away places, so long regarded as inaccessible, in these deep valleys, the antique refuge of fugitive or perishing hordes, the confusion and admixture of types has obtained in a less degree. Alien to one another, the tribes here have remained isolated within their wild confines. They have preserved as many special peculiarities in administration, language and manners as their mountains have valleys, or perhaps even pastures and hamlets. It may happen that crossing a torrent six times in the course of an hour's journey as many races will be met with, having each a distinct physiognomy and traditions which substantiate the diversity of their origin.

The existing cantons are made up of a multitude of states. The weaker among them were joined by fear, by treaty, by necessity, even by force to the already powerful republics, and the latter by much astuteness, by growth, by cajolery, invasion, or conquest, became after five centuries of prosperity possessors of all the district within sound of the bells of their capitals.

Reputable weakness! Had they only known, had they only been able to discover therein the means of that public happiness, which seems so attainable in a region which is enclosed naturally, so impossible in an extensive country governed by the fatal pride of conquest and the ostentation of empire more fatal still!

You will be perfectly well aware that my intention was to

speak simply of physiognomical characteristics. You will, I am sure, do me this justice. In certain portions of the Oberland, in those pastures which for the most part slope to the east and the north-east, there is a whiteness of skin among the women which would be noticeable even in towns, and at the same time a freshness of complexion which it would be rare to find in these. Furthermore, at the foot of the mountains, no great distance from Fribourg, I have met with lineaments of great beauty, the general character of which has been a majestic repose. For example, the female servant of a farmer had only one noticeable point, the outline of her cheek, but it was so lovely, and it imparted to the whole of her face an expression so august and so calm that an artist might have taken her head as an ideal model for Semiramis.

However, beauty of countenance and a few wonderful or superb characteristics are quite apart from general perfection, from that grace instinct with harmony which constitutes true beauty. I have no wish to rule dogmatically over points which may be thought very delicate, but here, as it seems to me, there is a certain rudeness of form, and speaking generally, striking characteristics or beauty of the picturesque order are found rather than finished beauty. In the places which I mentioned at the outset, the upper part of the cheek is markedly prominent; indeed, this is almost universal, and Porta would refer it to the head of the genus *pecus* as to a common prototype.

Now, if it should happen that a French peasant-girl were very pretty at the age of eighteen, before two-and-twenty her tanned face would have become tired and spi[illegible] these mountains, on the contrary, the women [illegible] by their hay-making in all the brilliance of [illegible] impossible to travel through their country [illegible] periencing a surprise, and yet, taking only t[illegible]

artist made it his model, it would be only by way of an exception.

It is affirmed that there is nothing so rare as a fine bust in the greater part of Switzerland. I know a painter who goes so far as to say that, in this respect, the general deficiency is so universal that most of the women cannot imagine things otherwise, and consider that pictures from Nature in Greece, England and France are merely monstrous fictions. Although this species of perfection seems to belong to a type of beauty which is foreign to this country, I cannot believe that it is universally wanting, as if the most interesting graces were excluded by the modern name of the country which unites so many families who have no community of origin, and whose marked differences are still persistent.

On the other hand, should the statement prove well founded, and should it be also true that there is a certain irregularity in the form, these facts might be explained by the asperity which seems inseparable from the Alpine atmosphere. It is indubitably true that Switzerland, though it can boast fine men, more especially in the vicinity of the mountains, as, for example, in Hasle and the Haut Valais, contains notwithstanding an abnormal proportion of idiots, and above all of those half-idiots, creatures with glandular affections, imbeciles and deformed people. Many of the inhabitants, without actually being afflicted by goitre, seem subject to kindred maladies. Such swellings and enlargements may be attributed to the coarser constituents of the water, and of the air more than all, which stop and clog the ducts, and would seem to approximate the nutriment of man to that of the vegetable. Is it possible that the land is cultivated sufficiently for other animals but is still too savage for humanity? Or may it not also be that the plains, covered with an

artificial soil by an incessant trituration, impart vapours to the atmosphere which are more adapted to the requirements of the organised being, while from rocks, quagmires and waters that are always in darkness, there is an emanation of grosser particles, too uncultivated, so to speak, and hurtful to delicate organs? Possibly the nitre in the snow, which subsists even in midsummer, finds entrance too easily into our open pores. Snow has secret but incontestable effects on the nerves, and on men subject to gout and rheumatism, so that an effect still more concealed upon our whole organisation is not out of the question. Thus Nature, which qualifies all things, would compensate by unknown dangers for the romantic loveliness of the regions which are unsubdued by man.

LETTER LXXVIII

IMENSTRÔM, *July* 16 (IX).

I am fully in agreement with you, and should be content with even slighter occasion to decide me to write. There is something sustaining to the soul in this commerce with thinking beings of various ages. To imagine one's self at the side of Pythagoras, Plutarch, or Ossian, or in the study of a future L., is an illusion which has a side of grandeur and is indeed one of man's noblest hobbies. Whoever has seen the scalding tear on the cheek of the unfortunate falls to dreams of a still more alluring kind; he pictures himself imparting to the man of mournful disposition the price of the joy of his kind; forestalling the moans of the forgotten victim; restoring some strength to the desolated heart by recalling to it those perceptions, vast or consoling, which mislead some or sustain others.

Some consider that our evils have only a slender ground, and that moral good is within easy reach of man. The notion of universal happiness is inferred from theoretical consequences, overlooking that force which maintains us in the state of confusion wherein the human race is lost. It is customary to proclaim our determination to oppose errors, follow natural principles, and express only what is good or may become good. Such intentions seem to render us less useless and abandoned on earth; we combine the dream of great things with the peace of an obscure life, and truly enjoy the ideal because we think that we can turn it to account. The order of things ideal is like a new world, possible but not realised; human genius has recourse to it when seeking to conceive of a harmony in accordance with our wants, and brings back to earth more favourable modifications modelled on this supernatural type.

The constant versatility of man demonstrates that he is quickly adaptable to fresh habits. By the combination of things which have been actualised in a variety of times and places it would be possible to form a whole less unsuited to his heart than all that has been so far proposed to him. Such is my task!

The close of day is reached without weariness only by some self-imposed labour, even if otherwise vain. I will approach the evening of my life, if possible, deluded and sustained by the hope of increasing those resources which have been vouchsafed to man. Illusions are necessary to my heart, too great not to long for them and too weak to dispense with them.

Since the experience of happiness is our first requirement, what shall he do who neither looks for it in the present nor dares to expect it in the future? Must he not seek its expression in a friendly eye, on the countenance of the being who is like himself? He can do no otherwise

than long for the joy of his kind; he has no other happiness but that which he imparts. When he has never wakened the sensation of life in another, has caused no rejoicing, the cold of death is at the bottom of his rejected heart; he seems to finish in the darkness of the void.

We hear of men who are sufficient to themselves and find nourishment in their own wisdom. If they have eternity before them, I admire and envy them; if otherwise, I fail to understand them.

For myself, I not only fall far short of happiness as things now are, not only shall I never attain it, but if the reasonable suppositions which I might make should come to be realised, I should fail of it all the same. The affections of man are an abyss of greed, repentance and errors.

I do not tell you what I feel, what I wish, what I am; I no longer distinguish my necessities, I scarcely know my desires. If you believe that you are acquainted with my tastes, you will be deceived therein. You say amidst your solitary lands and your mighty waters: Where is he who no longer possesses me? Where is the friend whom I have found neither at Africa nor at the Antilles? Here is the clouded time which would soothe his sadness; he goes forth wandering; he broods over my regrets and the void of his own years; he listens with his face to the West, as if the notes of my daughter's harp could reach his lonely ear; he sees the jasmine which covers my terrace, my grey hat moving behind the trees, the print of my shoes on the sand; he longs for the cool evening air.—Vain dreams, I cry to you, I shall have already changed. And again does the same sky brood over us who have found in such different climates a land which is alien to that of our early days.

In the midst of your balmy evenings a winter wind may here terminate the scorching days. The sun has burnt up

the grass in the vicinity of the cowsheds; on the morrow the cows press eagerly forth expecting to find it freshened by the dew of the night, but two feet of snow cover the roofs above them, and they must perforce drink their own milk. For myself, I am more uncertain and variable than this outlandish climate. That which to-day I like, or at least do not find displeasing, may be repugnant by the time that you have read about it, yet it will not be a great change. I find the weather charming; it is calm, it is quiet, and I go out of doors meaning to remain abroad a long time, but in a quarter of an hour I am back again. A squirrel, upon hearing me, has clambered to the top of a fir tree. I put aside all these notions; a blackbird is singing over my head. I retrace my steps and shut myself up in my study. After all, I must find a book which will not weary me. If some one comes in to ask me a question, or to take an order, he apologises for disturbing me, but I have really been rendered a service. This burden goes as it came. If I can secure distraction, I am content, but to find it for myself I am unable. I cling to my suffering, and am in love with it so long as it lasts; when it is over I experience an extravagant rapture.

You will say that I have indeed changed. Once I was impatient of life; once I put up with it as an evil which would last but for a few months. This state of feeling now seems foreign to myself; it would be even a source of astonishment, if I were capable of astonishment at the rapid changes of my sensations. I see no reason for leaving, and about as little for remaining. I am tired, but, amidst my fatigue, I recognise that it is not unpleasant to be in repose. Life at once wearies and amuses me. To appear on this scene, to grow up, to make a noise in the world, to be harassed over a thousand things, to calculate the orbit of comets, and then after some days to

sleep beneath the turf of a graveyard; that seems to me rather fantastic to follow to the end.

But why pretend that it is the ingrained habit of weariness, or the misfortune of a saturnine disposition, which disturbs and confuses our desires and perceptions, which alloys our life itself with this consciousness of the lapse and vacuity of the days of man? There is no need for a melancholic humour to determine the hues of life. Ask not the son of the Incas, chained in those mines whence the gold was taken once for the palace of his ancestors and the temple of the sun; ask not the diligent and irreproachable labourer begging in his infirm and despised old age; ask not innumerable unfortunates the value of human hopes and human prosperities; ask not Heraclites to calculate the importance of our plans, or Hegesias the worth of life. Voltaire, loaded with success, feasted in courts and admired in Europe — Voltaire, illustrious, masterly, intellectual, generous; Seneca, upheld by wisdom, amused by honours, wealthy to the extent of thirty millions—Seneca in the shadow of the throne of the Cæsars and within an ace of himself ascending it; Seneca of use to men and Voltaire making sport of their delusions: these will tell you of the soul's delights, of the heart and its rest, of the value and the permanence of the progress of our days.

My friend, I have yet some hours on earth. We are poor maniacs while we live, but we are nonentities when we live no more. And then there are always schemes left for completion. I have a splendid one now in my head—to measure the volume of water which falls here in the course of ten years. As to the thermometer, I have abandoned it; it involves getting up in the middle of the night, and when the night is dark it necessitates a light at hand, which it will be necessary to place in a cupboard, because darkness in essential to me in my bedroom—one of the few

important matters in which I have not yet altered. More over, if I am to take interest in the temperature here, I must give up neglecting what takes place elsewhere. I must arrange for observations in the deserts of Senegal and on the top of the Labrador mountains. Another matter interests me more keenly—to ascertain whether there have been further explorations of Central Africa. Those vast unknown countries, where it might be possible, as I think— But I am apart from the world. If it is becoming better known, tell me, but I am not sure whether you appreciate my meaning.

LETTER LXXIX

July 17 (IX).

If I told you that a presentiment of celebrity to come would not be to me any source of satisfaction, you would scarcely believe me out of hand. You would think that I deceived myself, and you would be right. It is very rarely that the need of self-respect is found wholly detached from the pleasure, no less natural, which is taken in the estimation of some others, and in the knowledge that we are counted among them. But the thirst for peace, and a certain indolence of soul which has increased with my disillusion, might well lead me to forget this particular fascination as I have forgotten others. I require to be at once restrained and stimulated by the fear of that self-reproach which would be unavoidable if, ameliorating nothing, making sluggish use of things as they are, I were guilty of neglecting also the sole means of activity which accords with the obscurity of my life.

Must not man prove himself something, and, in one or another sense, play an energetic part? If otherwise, he will lapse into despondency and abdicate the dignity of

his being; he will misread his gifts, or if conscious of them, it will be only for the torment of his hard-pressed soul. He will not be heard, followed, or considered. The small modicum of good which should result even from the life of greatest nullity will be no longer in his power. Simplicity is a very beautiful and useful precept, but it has been woefully misconstrued. The mind which does not perceive the manifold phases of things will pervert the best maxims and degrade wisdom itself by depriving it of means, reducing it to penury and dishonouring it by the disorder which then results.

Assuredly a man of letters in dingy linen, housed in a garret, patching his garments and copying anything for a living, can with difficulty be of use in the world, or have the authority which is required for doing good. At fifty years old he marries the laundress whose room is on the same floor, or, supposing him to have saved anything, he marries his servant. Has he sought to render morality ridiculous, and subject it to the sarcasms of triflers? He does more outrage to opinion than the priest who is subsidised to call the world daily to a worship which he has betrayed, than the factious monk who boasts about peace and abnegation, or the charlatans of probity, of which a section of society is full, whose every phrase is larded with manners, virtues, honesty, and to whom, notwithstanding, no one would lend a shilling without security.

Every man who is possessed of a just mind and has a desire to be useful, though only in his private capac every one, in a word, who is worthy o tion, seeks for recognition. He shape he may insure it, even in those th human opinion is of itself vain, provid involves nothing opposed to his duties or

results of his character. If there is a rule with no exception, this ought, I think, to be the one. I affirm freely that it is invariably through some vice, either of heart or judgment, that public opinion is disdained, or a disdain for the same is affected, wherever justice does not itself demand the sacrifice.

It is possible to obtain consideration even in the most obscure station, given an ordered house and a certain dignity in the mode of life. It can be possessed even amidst poverty, when a name has been earned, when people know what we have done, when the manner is greater than the fortune, when a distinction is established between that which would be misery in the vulgar and the deprivation of an extreme mediocrity. The man of high character is in no case confused with the crowd, and if in order to avoid the possibility he must stoop to minute precautions, I conceive that he will bring himself to do so. Nor can I think that it will be the prompting of vanity; the perception of what is naturally congruous induces each man to take his proper place, or to insure that he is set there by others. If it were a vain desire to excel, the superior man would dread the obscurity of the desert and its privations as he dreads the lowness and wretchedness of the social dregs; but he fears to degrade himself, not to miss elevation; to fill an unimportant part is not repugnant to his nature, but from one that is opposed to his nature he indeed rebels.

If a species of authority is necessary for all the actions of life, it is indispensable to the writing man. Public consideration is one of his strongest levers; without it he follows only a trade, and this trade becomes mean because it is substituted for a great function.

It is absurd and revolting that an author should dare speak to man of his duties without being himself upright.

But if the ill-conducted moralist earns only contempt, he that is unknown remains so wholly useless that his writings at least are ridiculous if he escapes from being so himself. All that should be holy among men lost force when books of philosophy, religion and morality were exposed amidst the mire of the quays, and solemn pages were given over to the vilest usages of commerce.

Were fame and the public verdict of themselves vain, they should not be despised or neglected, since they are a great means for the attainment of the most praiseworthy and important ends. It is equally disproportionate to do nothing in view of them, or all things on their account. Great purposes accomplished are beautiful by the fact of their grandeur and without it being necessary to dwell on their production and improvement, but it is not the same with those that are merely planned. The courage of a person who perishes at the bottom of the sea is a lost example, and it is the same with the truest thought and the wisest conception if these are not communicated; their utility depends on their expression, it is their celebrity which causes them to be fruitful.

It might perhaps be desirable for philosophical writings to be always preceded by a good book of an entertaining character, to be circulated, read and enjoyed widely. The man with a name has greater confidence in speaking; he does more and better because he anticipates that his labour is not without its result. Unfortunately the courage or the opportunities to take such precautions are not always forthcoming; writings, like other things, are the sport of chance, occasionally of an unexpected kind: they are ruled by influences often foreign to our projects.

To write a book simply with a view to a name is a task which is to some extent repulsive and servile; though I admit that there are reasons which would appear to impose

it upon me, I dare not undertake and should certainly abandon it.

At the same time, I have no wish to make a start with the work which I am projecting. It is too important and too difficult for me ever to accomplish it perfectly; it will be much if I find it some day approaching the ideal which I have conceived. This remote prospect is, however, insufficient to sustain me. Yet it is advisable for me, I think, to turn author speedily, that I may have the courage to continue being one. I shall be making a declared stand, and in such a way that I must follow it to fulfil my destiny.

LETTER LXXX

August 2 (IX).

I feel in agreement with you that a romance is wanted, one of those real romances of which we have a few examples. The task, however, is great, and would occupy me for a long time. From many points of view I should not be fitted to undertake it, and for the plot I should have to depend on inspiration.

Meanwhile I think that I will write my travels. My design is that those who read them shall follow me through the habitable world. When we have taken stock of it together and have acquired something of a common point of view, we will retrace our steps and discuss it. So do two elderly friends take a turn in the country, look about and muse without much conversation, merely pointing out objects with their canes, but in the evening, with the fire in front of them, they chat about all that they have seen in their walk.

The pageant of life is full of great beauties, and we must suppose ourselves here merely for purposes of observation.

We must be interested without illusion or passion, but also without indifference, as one becomes engrossed in the vicissitudes, emotions and perils of a fictitious narrative written in an attractive style.

The way of the world is a drama coherent enough to engage our attention, varied enough to enlist interest, fixed and regulated sufficiently to satisfy the reason, to amuse us with its systems, and yet with enough of uncertainty to stimulate our desires and nourish our passions. If we were impassible during life, the idea of death would be unbearable, but we are alienated by suffering and repelled by disgust; much impotence and many anxieties make us forget to observe, and we withdraw coldly, even as we depart from a theatre when a tiresome neighbour, the excessive heat, or the vitiated air have substituted weariness for eagerness and impatience for curiosity.

What style shall I select? None. I shall write as I speak, without thinking about it; if it were necessary to do otherwise, I should not write at all. There is this difference, however, that a verbal utterance cannot be corrected, while it is possible to cancel in revising what may be likely to displease the reader.

The poets and sophists of a less advanced period read their books aloud in assemblies, when the delivery had to be adapted to the style and the latter to the way in which it would be read. The art of reading is much like that of writing. The elegances and accuracies of expression in reading are as infinite as the shades of thought. I can scarcely imagine a bad reader with a graceful manner in writing or a just and comprehensive mind. Genius in sentiment and incapability of expression seem no less incompatible than the power to express forcibly that which we do not feel.

Whatever side may be taken on the question whether all

has been said or not from the ethical standpoint, it cannot be maintained that nothing remains to be done in this the sole science of man. It is insufficient for a thing to be uttered, it must be made public, demonstrated, impressed on all, and generally acknowledged. Nothing has been accomplished until the express law has been subjected to the moral law, till public opinion has perceived the things in question under their true relationships.

Disorder must be combated so long as disorder exists. Do we not daily come across things which are rather the errors of the mind than the outcome of the passions, in which there is more of blunder than perversity, which are not so much the crime of an individual as an almost inevitable effect of public negligence or absurdity?

Are we no longer justified in asking those of independent fortune by what fatality they subsist in greater real want and anxiety than those who daily toil in their service? And in saying to unfaithful children whose eyes are not opened to the degradation of their infidelity: You are veritable robbers, and of a class which the law should punish more severely than those who despoil a stranger. To open theft you add the most hateful perfidy. The dishonest servant is punished with more severity than a stranger, because he abuses a confidence, and security must be insured at least in one's home. Are not these considerations, which obtain for any one in a fiduciary position, much stronger for the son of the house? Who can deceive with more impunity? Who is wanting towards more sacred duties? From whom is it so painful to withdraw confidence? If considerations are interposed to arrest the law, there is the greater need of educating opinion rather than abandoning it, as is too often the case; of fixing its variations, and above all making it adequately respected, so that it may fulfil what our vacillating laws do not dare to undertake.

Is it necessary no longer to say to women who are full of sensibility, pure intentions, youth and frankness: Why yield such inestimable advantages to the first pretender? Do you not observe in his very letters, amidst the fantastic jargon of his crass sentiments, expressions, one of which alone is sufficient to disclose the slender estimation in which he holds you and the degradation in which he feels himself? He amuses you, but he also deceives and makes sport of you; he is preparing your shame and abandonment. You would feel it and know it, but through weakness, or possibly through indolence, you risk the honour of your life. It may even happen that for the diversion of a night you will corrupt your whole existence. The law cannot touch him; he will have the sorry licence of laughing at you. How have you mistaken this wretched creature for a man? Would it not have been better to wait and to be still waiting? What a distance there is between man and man! Amiable women, do you not realise your worth? Speak not of the need of love, that does not excuse you! The paramount need is not to debase yourself, and the necessities of the heart should of themselves render you indifferent to one who has no quality of man except that of not being a woman. Do not find an excuse in the age. If our moral institutions are in their childhood, if we have confused everything, if our reason be groping in the dark, your imprudence, if less unpardonable, is not for that exonerated.

So long as our soul is pure woman's name is powerful, and seemingly the name of man can also impose somewhat upon young hearts; but whatsoever the sweetness in which these illusions hide, be not too much overcome by them. If man is the natural friend of woman, it is true also that women have often no greater enemy. All men have the promptings of their sex, but wait for him who has its soul

What can there be in common between you and the creature who is endowed only with appetites?

"Has it not frequently happened that we have been drawn by the feeling of happiness into the abyss of misery, that our nature has been vitiated by our most legitimate desires, and that we have become greedily intoxicated with bitterness? We have all the frankness of youth, all the longings of inexperience, all the needs of a new life, and the hope of a sincere heart. We have all the faculties of love and we are impelled to love. We have all the means of delight and we must ourselves be loved. We are entering upon existence; what can we do therewith in the absence of love? We have beauty, freshness, grace, suppleness, nobility, charm of manner. Why this harmony of the movements, this voluptuous modesty, this voice formed for all expression, this smile for alluring all, this glance made for the melting of the heart of man? Why this delicacy of heart and this profound sensibility? Age, desire, expedience, soul, sensibility, all demand it; it is indeed a necessity. Everything expresses, everything exacts love: this skin so soft and of a whiteness so delicately tinted; this hand shaped for the tenderest caresses; this eye of depths unknown till it speaks and says, 'I consent to be loved'; this breast which, apart from love, is motionless, mute, useless, and would at length wither without being rendered divine; these lineaments, these outlines which would change without having been known, admired, possessed; these sentiments so tender, so voluptuous and grand, the ambition of the heart, the heroism of passion! That delicious law, prescribed by the law of the world, must assuredly be fulfilled. That intoxicating part, which is known so well, which is recalled by every one, which day inspires and night commands, what young, sensible and loving woman will dream of refusing to fill it?

"Cease, therefore, from imagining that just, noble and pure hearts are other than the first to be undone. More susceptible of exaltation, they cannot fail to be led away by that which love can give. They are nourished on deceptions, believing that they are nourished on esteem; they discover that they are in love with a man, because they are in love with virtue; they are betrayed by scoundrels, because, unable to love truly any one but a noble man, they feel assured that he who offers to realise their chimera is of necessity such.

"Energy of soul, esteem confidence, the necessity of displaying it, the necessity of having it; sacrifices to reward, fidelity to crown, hope to sustain, an advance to follow; the agitation, the unbearable disquiet of the heart and the senses; the laudable anxiety to attempt the return of so much love, the anxiety no less just of riveting, consecrating, perpetuating, immortalising chains so dear; yet other desires, some fear, some curiosity, chances which point to it, destiny which wills it—all these combine to deliver a loving woman into the arms of Lovelace. She loves, he amuses himself; she yields herself, he amuses himself; she enjoys, he amuses himself; she dreams of perpetuity, happiness, the long enchantment of mutual affection; she is in celestial vision, she beholds that eye kindled with pleasure, she would confer a still greater felicity, but the monster amuses himself; the arms of pleasure force her into the abyss, she devours a terrible delight.

"On the morrow she is surpr[illegible]less, dreamy; sombre presentiments [illegible] and a life of bitterness. Resp[illegible] conscience, pride of [illegible] love, all these are gone [illegible] of loving and liv[illegible]

precarious, flouted, miserable days to drag along. There is no longer any question of plunging deeper into illusions, into love, into life; there are dreams to thrust aside, there is oblivion to seek, there is death to await. Sincere and loving women, adorned with all outward graces and every charm of soul, made to be purely, tenderly, faithfully loved —love not!"

LETTER LXXXI

August 5 (IX).

You admit that morality alone should engage the writer who proposes to accomplish a great and useful end; but certain views on the nature of life towards which you think that I have hitherto seemed to lean, are not in consonance with the investigation of the moral laws and the foundation of duties.

I should like to avoid self-contradiction and will strive to do so, but with the variations of incertitude I cannot reproach my weakness. I have examined to no purpose and have brought to such examination impartiality and even severity, but I can find no real contradictions.

There may be some discrepancy between different things which I have said, were these to be regarded as positive statements, as the several parts of a system, or of a body of principles set out as certainties, interlinked with and deduced from one another. But detached thoughts, speculations over things impenetrable, may vary without being in contradiction. I may confess even that there is this or that conjecture as to the course of Nature which at times I find exceedingly possible and at others much less so, according to the way in which my imagination approaches the subject.

I may happen to say: Necessity rules all things, and

if the world on this principle be inexplicable, on any other it is impossible.—But having thus interpreted the position it may so happen on the morrow that, taking the opposite standpoint, I observe on the contrary: So many things are ruled according to intelligence, that numbers of others must also be governed thereby. Intelligence may choose among the possibilities inhering in the necessary essence of things, and the nature of such possibilities, comprised within a limited sphere, is such that, although the world can exist only after certain modes, each thing is susceptible, notwithstanding, of many different constructions. Intelligence is not sovereign over matter, but it makes use thereof. It cannot create or destroy it, it cannot denaturalise or change its laws, but it can stimulate, adapt, combine it. It is not an omnipotence, it is a vast industry, limited by the laws inherent in the essence of beings; it is a sublime alchemy, which man terms supernatural because it exceeds his conception.

Here, you will say, are two systems which cannot both be admitted. I grant it; yet there is no contradiction, since I present them as hypotheses only. I do not maintain or even admit either in any precise way, nor do I assume to be acquainted with that which is unknowable by man.

Every general system concerning the nature of existence and the laws of the world is at most a notion that is hazarded. A few may give credence to these their dreams, or desire that others should do so, but it is either from utter charlatanism or overweening obstinacy. For myself, I can only question, and if I say definitely that necessity rules all things, or again, that a secret force is working to an end which we can at times foresee, I employ these positive expressions to save the incessant repetition of "It seems to me," "I suppose," "I imagine." Such a way of speaking can neither represent my conviction nor deceive any one,

for who, unless he is demented, will affirm what it is impossible to know?

It is altogether different when, forsaking these dark researches, we confine ourselves to the only human science, namely, ethics. While the eye of man can discern nothing as to the essence of existences, it can see all that concerns the relations of man. We find therein a light which is adjusted to our organs; there we can discover, reason, affirm. There also we are answerable for our ideas, their connection, their agreement, their truth; and it is there that assured principles must be sought, as it is there, in fine, that contradictory consequences would be unpardonable.

The study of ethics may be open to a single objection, but, though this offers a serious difficulty, it is not one which need detain us. On the hypothesis that necessity rules all things, what will result from our researches, our precepts, our virtues? That it rules in such a manner is not, however, proven; the opposite sentiment obtains in man, and it is enough that in every action of life he considers that he is left to himself. In spite of destiny, the stoic believed in virtue, and those orientals who cling to the dogma of fatalism are like other men in respect of their actions, fears and desires. Did I even regard the universal law of necessity as probable, I might still investigate the principles of improved human institutions. When crossing a lake on a stormy day, I might say to myself: If events are unchangeably determined, it matters little whether the rowers are drunk or not. But as it is possible that it may be otherwise, I should rather advise them not to drink till after they get ashore.—If necessity rules all things, it rules also my caution herein, and, in like manner, the fact that I am erroneously terming it caution.

I have no head for those subtleties by which it is pretended to harmonise free will with foreknowledge, choice

on the part of man with absolute power in God, the infinite detestation which the Author of all justice has necessarily for all sin, and the inconceivable means which He has employed to prevent or repair it, with the persistent empire of injustice and an opportunity for criminal conduct so long as we choose. I experience some difficulty in conciliating both the infinite benevolence which by its will created man and the indubitable knowledge of what would come of it with the eternity of hideous torment for forty-nine out of fifty of the creatures who, notwithstanding, have been loved so well. I might discourse indefinitely, like others, and with skill or learning, on these impenetrable questions, but, if I ever write, I shall devote myself rather to that which concerns man socially united in his temporal life, since it seems to me that it is only by observing the consequences as to which we have assured indications that I can think of true things or give expression to things useful.

I may reach a certain point in the knowledge of man, but I cannot construe Nature. I can scarcely conceive of two opposed principles, coeternally making and unmaking; of a universe formed so late out of nothing subsisting for a time only, and thus cutting the indivisible eternity into three parts. I am indisposed to speak seriously about that of which I know nothing: "The natural man discerns not the things which are of the Spirit of God."

Nor, on the other hand, shall I ever comprehend how man, who acknowledges intelligence in himself, can pretend that the world does not contain intelligence. Unfortunately I can see no better how a faculty can be a substance. I shall be told that thought is not body, a physically divisible entity, and that death cannot, therefore, destroy it, whence, although it has begun, it is plain that it cannot end, and that as it is not body it is of necessity spirit. I

confess, to my misfortune, that this triumphant argument seems to me deficient in the merit of common sense.

Here is one which is more serious. Since there are religions established from of old, part and parcel of our human institutions, seeming natural to our weakness and the curb or consolation of many, it is good to follow and maintain the religion of the country in which one lives; should it be impossible to believe therein, silence must at least be preserved on this point, when writing for mankind at large, who must not be dissuaded from a faith which they love. This is your own opinion, and here is why I am unable to follow it.

I have no intention to undermine a religious belief in the valleys of the Cevennes or the Apennines, nor yet in my immediate neighbourhood of Maurienne or Switzerland; but when speaking of morality is it possible to say nothing of religions? That would be a misplaced affectation which, deceiving no one, would only embarrass my subject and destroy the coherence which alone could render it useful. We must respect, it is maintained, those opinions on which the hope of so many men reposes and the morality of a still greater number. I regard this reserve as wise and requisite in those who treat ethical questions only in an accidental manner, or write from a diverse point of view than my own will necessarily be. But if in writing about human institutions I should omit all reference to religious systems, it would be regarded only as a concession to some dominant party, and this would call for condemnation as a weakness. In venturing to assume such a function I must before all accept the duties which it involves. For my abilities I am unable to answer, and these will be less or more inadequate, but my intentions depend on myself, and if they are not invariably pure and steadfast I am unworthy of so great a vocation.

In literature I shall have no personal enemy, as I shall have none at any time in my private life; but when it is a question of proclaiming to man that which I regard as true, I must not be afraid of offending sect or party. I have no desire to offend any, but I have no law to accept from any. I shall attack things and not men; if men regret it, if I become an object of horror to some of them, I shall not be surprised, but this I would not even foresee. If in many kinds of writing it be possible to dispense with the mention of religions, this is a choice which is denied me, and I regret it on several accounts. Every unbiassed person will acknowledge that such silence is impossible in a project like mine, the sole literary work to which I can attach importance.

In writing upon the dispositions of man and upon the general system of ethics, I shall therefore speak of religions, and assuredly, in so doing, I can say only that which I think. As this is unavoidable, I make no attempt to exclude from our correspondence what chance offers on the subject; otherwise, and in despite of a certain constraint which would follow from it, I should much prefer to withhold what I feel must displease, or, more correctly, must afflict you.

On your part, I would ask you whether, if in certain chapters I proceed to investigate religions as accidental institutions, and to speak of that which comes, as it is said, from Jerusalem, how I can be expected to do so as if I had been born at Jerusalem? I would ask you what real evil can ensue in places quickened by the European spirit, where notions are clear and conceptions disillusionised, where we live in the forgetfulness of prestige, in the unconcealed study of positive and demonstrated sciences?

I would disabuse no one whose head is so empty as to say that if there were no hell it would not be worth while

to be honest. By a few such persons my book may, of course, be read, nor I do not flatter myself that no harm whatsoever can result from what I shall undertake with the intention of doing good, but possibly I may also reduce the number of those fond souls who believe only in duty through their faith in perdition; perhaps I shall insure the survival of duty when relics and horned demons will have ceased to be in fashion.

The people at large will, unavoidably, come sooner or later, and in any case before long has elapsed, to disdain one of the two ideas which they have been accustomed to accept only together, and it is therefore advisable to make it plain to them that the separation of those ideas is quite possible without the neglect of the one entailing the subversion of the other.

This time, as I think, is quickly drawing near; it will be recognised more universally that we must build no longer on a failing foundation the moral citadel without which we should live in a state of secret warfare, and in the midst of a more detestable perfidy than the vengeance and prolonged hatred of savage hordes.

LETTER LXXXII

IMENSTRÔM, *August* 6 (IX).

Whether I shall depart from my snow-swathed mountains, whether I shall go forth to behold that smiling country of which you give me so alluring a description, where the winter is so clement, the spring so sweet, where the emerald waters break their billows which are born in America—I do not know. Those which I gaze on now come not from so far away; in the clefts of these my rocks, where, like the melancholy owl, I go in search of darkness, such immensity

would be equally ill-suited to my eyes or thoughts. And yet the regret that I am away from you increases daily.

I do not chide myself on account of it. I am rather surprised; seeking something to explain it, I discover nothing, and yet I could do no otherwise, I assure you. Some day I shall repair to you—that is settled. I long to see you in your home; I yearn to bring away from it the secret of being happy, when nothing is wanting but ourselves.

At the same time I will visit the Pont du Gard and the Languedoc Canal. I will gaze upon the Grande Chartreuse, but it shall be on my way and not as I return. You will know the reason. I love my retreat; I shall love it more as the days go on, but to live alone I feel that I have the strength no longer. Let us turn to other matters.

In yet a few days all here will be finished. For four already I have been sleeping in my own room.

When I let my windows remain open during the night, I can hear distinctly the plash of the fountain, as the water falls into its basin; it breaks, as the breath of the wind moves it, against the iron bars designed to support the vessels brought thither to be filled. There are perhaps few natural accidents so romantic as the sound of light water falling upon still water, when all is at its nocturn, and we distinguish alone in some valley's depth a torrent rolling profoundly through dense forest land in the heart of the silence.

That fountain is under a wide roof, as I think I have told you; the sound of its fall has less of wildness than it would have in the open air, but it is more curious and pleasing. Sheltered, without being enclosed, resting on a good bed in the midst of the desert, possessing in one's own home the advantages of the savage state, the conveniences of luxury are joined to the strength of Nature. Primeval

things have been shaped, as it would seem, by our labour, but their laws have not been abrogated, and a sway so light knows, it would seem, no limits. Of such is all man.

This great roof, this covering, with which you will observe that I am well satisfied, is seven fathoms wide and more than twenty long, being in a line with the other buildings. It is in fact the most commodious of structures; it joins the barn and the house; without touching the latter, it communicates therewith by a gallery of light construction, which can be cut quickly in case of fire. Coach, state-coach, travelling-coach, tools, firewood, carpenter's shop, spring—it holds all without confusion. One can work and wash there also, and make whatsoever is required without being distressed by the sun, the snow, or the mud.

Since I hope no longer to see you here, except at some remote period, I will disclose to you my entire way of living. I will describe my whole domicile, and perhaps there will be moments when I shall depict you as sharing it with me, and us examining, deliberating and rearranging together.

LETTER LXXXIII

September 24 (IX).

I waited with some impatience until you had finished your journeys; I have new matters to impart to you.

M. de Fonsalbe is here. He arrived five weeks ago, and has come to stay; his wife also has been here. Though he has spent some years on the sea, he is a steady and quiet man. He neither gambles, nor hunts, nor smokes; he drinks nothing, has never danced, and he does not sing. At the same time he is not by any means melancholy, though I think that he has known much sorrow in the past. His countenance unites the pleasing indications of the soul's calm with the traces of profound misfortune.

His eye, which usually expresses only a species of repose and dejection, was intended to express everything; his head is uncommon in its characteristics, and amidst his habitual calm, if a great idea or a strong sentiment should arouse him, he assumes without premeditation the silent attitude of command. I have heard an actor admired for his delivery of the "I will it," "I ordain it," of Nero, but Fonsalbe would utter them better.

I speak to you impartially. He is not so equable within as without, but, granting that he has the misfortune or defect of an incapacity for happiness, he has too much good sense for discontent. He is just the man to work the cure of my own impatience; he has taken his stand, and what is more than this, he has proved to me, beyond all contention, that I also should take mine. He maintains that with a life of independence and health added, though with these only, a man must be an idiot to be happy, and a fool to be miserable. You will see readily that, in view of this statement, I could only affirm that, for myself, I was neither one nor the other, and so I affirmed accordingly. Now, it follows that I must comport myself in the future so as not to have told an untruth.

I begin, nevertheless, to find something beyond independent life and health. Fonsalbe will prove a friend, and more, a friend in my loneliness. I do not say a friend as we understood the term formerly. We have both passed the age of heroics. Now it is a question of passing one's days in peace; the great things of life do not incline to me. I limit myself, you say, to an attempt at extracting some good from the little which is vouchsafed me by destiny; with such a purpose in view it would be a fine thing to dream of friendship after the fashion of the old days! Setting aside both the friends pictured in the past and those which are to be met with in the cities, let us

while their future existence was proved to me in the Alps.

When the men of those days gone by in which it was not preposterous to be a man, withdrew into deep solitude, within the caverns of the mountains, it was not merely to meditate on institutions which they were then projecting; thought is not less possible at home, and if silence be essential, this also can be found in the city. Nor was it simply to impose upon the public; some elementary miracle of magic could have been performed more easily, and would have had no less influence on imagination. But the soul which is least in subjection does not wholly escape from the tyranny of habit, from that conclusion which for the crowd is so persuasive and so specious for genius itself, from that doctrine of routine which out of the commonest condition of man educes a natural evidence and demonstration of his destiny. Separation from human things is indispensable, not in order to see that they are susceptible of change, but to have the courage to believe it. Such isolation is not necessary to devise the means which should be employed, but to hope for their success. Go into retreat, and in retreat you will see. The habit of the old order is weakened, the extraordinary is judged without bias, and is a matter of romance no longer; there is faith and, on coming forth, success.

Before Fonsalbe was due to return I made my way to the road, drenched even to the skin. He maintained that he could reach the actual situation of the waterfall without any such inconvenience. I waited to see; at first it seemed that he would succeed, but the water-spout was exceedingly fluctuating, though there was no wind at all in the valley. As we were about to retire he was drenched in a single second, after which he permitted himself to be led, and I took him to the same spot where I had myself been seated.

But I was afraid that the sudden variations of atmospheric pressure might affect his chest, which is not so strong as my own, and we retired almost immediately. So far I had striven in vain to make him understand me otherwise than by signs, but when we were some few yards away, and before he was well out of his astonishment, I asked him, in a situation like this, what became of the habits of a man, even of his most powerful affections, and of the passions which he believes to be unconquerable.

We walked to and fro between the torrent and the roadway, agreeing that a person of the strongest organisation might have no positive passion, despite his aptitude for all, and that there have been actually many such among mankind, not only among rulers of nations, but magi, gymnosophists, and the true and faithful believers of various religions, whether Islamism, Christianity, or Buddhism.

The superior man has all the faculties of man, and can experience all human affections, but he pauses only at the grandest which his destiny affords him. Whosoever tolerates the subservience of great thoughts to small or selfish ideas; whosoever, amidst things important either for his activity or his decision, is moved by mean affections and sordid interests, is not a superior man.

The latter never fails to see further than himself or his performances; instead of being behind his destiny he advances invariably beyond its assigned limits, and this native impulsion of his soul is in no sense the greed of power or of dignities. He is above dignities and power; he loves all that is useful, noble and just; all that is beautiful he loves. He accepts power because he needs it to restore the beautiful and the useful, but he would by choice lead a simple life because this can be pure and good. At times he accomplishes what can be performed by human passions, but one thing to him is impossible,

and that is to accomplish it by passion. The true statesman as well as the superior man is never passionately enamoured of women, never loves gambling or wine, but I claim in addition to all this that he is never ambitious. When he acts like those who are born to gaze upon him with astonishment, he is not influenced by the motives which are familiar to them. He is neither suspicious nor confident, neither dissimulating nor frank, neither grateful nor without gratitude. He is nothing of the kind; his heart waits, his intelligence leads. So long as he is at his place he proceeds towards his end, which is order in its general sense and the improvement of the condition of men. Of whomsoever we can say that he knows this weakness or has that tendency, the same is a man like other men. But the man who is born to govern is just and absolute. When undeceived, he becomes even more; he is no longer absolute, no longer master, he is a sage.

LETTER LXXXV

IMENSTRÖM, *October* 12 (IX).

I must confess to the same fear. It was natural to conclude that the kind of indolence into which I have been plunged by my weariness would soon become almost an invincible habit; but on further reflection I felt that there was no real need for anxiety, that the evil was already within me, and that in circumstances similar to the present I should by my nature be just what I am. Yet it also seemed to me that in another situation I should be a different character altogether. The way that I vegetate in the order of things that now surrounds me would have no effect on my conduct did the time come for me to prescribe myself as much activity as there is little at present required of me.

What would be the use of attempting an erect posture at the hour for repose? Why go on living in the tomb? Because a man is diligent, and disinclined to squander his day, should he for that reason refuse to sleep at night? My night I admit is too long, but is it my fault if days are short and nights are dark in my natal season? Like any one else, I would be abroad when the summer is here; but awaiting that I sleep by the fireside during the frost. Fonsalbe is, I think, becoming somnolescent like myself. There is an incongruity, altogether in keeping with the misery of man, in our sad and tranquil habits amidst the most beautiful retreat of a country which is so beautiful, and in the ease of our life amidst a few unfortunates who, at the same time, are more contented than we shall ever be.

I must give you some account of our absurdities—you will find that, for the most part, there is no touch of bitterness in our languor. It is needless to tell you that I do not keep a large retinue. In the country, and with our way of living, there is plenty of occupation for the servants, and the bells may be pulled ten times before any one will appear. What I have sought is convenience and not display. I have also to avoid unnecessary expenses, and I am quite as willing to fatigue myself by pouring out water from a decanter into a glass as to ring till an able-bodied lackey is brought from the far end of the house to perform the office. As for Fonsalbe and myself, we scarcely move independently of one another, and a bell communicates from his sleeping apartment to my own, and also to my study. The mode of ringing it varies, and in this way we warn one another, not in accordance with what we want but in accordance with our fancies, so that the bell is sounding very frequently.

The more burlesque these fancies are
amuse us; they are the playthings of o

princes to this extent, and, without having states to govern, we pursue our somewhat farcical caprices. We always regard it as an advantage to have something to laugh at, but with this proviso, that our laughter causes no one mortification. Some perfect puerility brings us to a pause sometimes while computing the worlds with Lambert; sometimes also, imbued with the enthusiasm of Pindar, we amuse ourselves with the imposing strut of a guinea fowl, or the combative feats of two love-sick cats disputing for their inamorata.

For some time past we have come to this agreement, that whichever one of us goes for half-an-hour without being able to sleep shall wake up the other, so that he also may have his chance of exercising patience; similarly, he who has an amusing dream, or one calculated to produce a strong emotion, must immediately warn the other, so that when taking our tea next morning it may be explained according to the occult science of the elder world.

I can now toy a little with sleep, which I have begun to recover since I have given up coffee and either take tea very moderately or substitute butter-milk or simple water. I used to sleep, so to speak, without being aware of it, and without repose as without enjoyment. Both in sleeping and in waking I was absolutely the same as at mid-day, but now I obtain for a few minutes that sensation of the gradual approach of slumber, that voluptuous drowsiness which precedes complete oblivion of life and the daily return of which renders life tolerable to the unfortunate by its continuous suspension and division. At such times it is well to be in bed, even if one does not actually sleep. Towards morning I turn over, and though I am neither asleep nor awake I experience a sense of comfort, and dream at such times peacefully. Furthermore, in these calm moments I find pleasure in contemplating life, which seems quite foreign to

me, as if I had no part therein. What strikes me at such times above all is the babel of its ways and means, and the nothingness of its results; this vast toil of all beings either with one end that is uncertain, sterile, perhaps even contradictory, or with many ends that are opposed and vain. The moss flourishes on the rock which is battered by the waves, but its flower will perish. The violet blooms to no purpose under the shrub in the wilderness. Thus does man desire, and thus will he die. He is born by an accident, he makes attempts with no end in view, he battles without object, he feels and thinks in vain, he passes without having lived, while he even who has contrived to achieve life will pass in like manner. Cæsar won fifty battles and conquered the western world, but he has gone, and Mahomet and Pythagoras preceded him. The cedar which overshadowed the flock has passed like the grass which the flocks have trampled.

The more we strive to see, the more we plunge into the night. All things work for their conservation and reproduction; the end of their actions is apparent—why is that of their being concealed? The animal has organs, powers, industry to insure his subsistence, as well as the perpetuation of his species; he works to live and he lives; to reproduce his kind, and he reproduces it. But why live? Why perpetuate the species? I understand nothing of all this. The beast browses and dies! The man eats and dies! One morning I reflected upon everything that man does ere death overtakes him, and I was so impelled to laughter that I pulled the bell twice. At the breakfast hour, however, we never feel able to laugh, and on this particular day Fonsalbe pretended to discover a great deal that was serious in the things of art and of glory, in the transcendent sciences, the metaphysics of the trinities, and I know not what else.

After this breakfast I laid "The Spirit of Things" on my table and read almost the whole of one volume. I must admit to you that this system of the reparation of the world in no way repels me. It is not modern, but that can only increase its authority. It is grand, it is specious. The author has entered into the depths, and I take kindly to the excessive obscurity of his terms, for they make one the less struck with the obscurity of the things themselves. I am quite willing to believe that the hypothesis of a fortuitous degradation and a slow regeneration, of a force which vivifies, exalts, and subtilises, and of another which corrupts and degrades, is not the least plausible of our dreams about the nature of things. I would ask only how comes this great revolution, or how at least it should have come about; why the whole world thus escaped from the hands of the Eternal; how it was that the Eternal permitted it, or why He was unable to prevent it; and what power, alien to the Universal Power, has produced the universal catastrophe? This system explains everything except the initial difficulty, but the Oriental doctrine of two contending principles was clearer.

Whatever may be the answer to a question which doubtless is little intended for the dwellers on earth, I know nothing which accounts for the perpetual phenomenon, all the accidents of which overwhelm our intelligence and disconcert our curious eagerness. We see individuals combine together and multiply that they may advance with a growing and continuous force towards I know not what end, from which they are continually driven back. A celestial industry unceasingly produces by an infinity of means, while a principle of inertia, a dead force, resists coldly and extinguishes and destroys wholesale. The particular agents are all passive, but tend notwithstanding zealously towards that which they cannot conceive, and the end of this

general tendency, unknown as it is to them, would seem also unknown to all that exists. Not only does the system of beings seem full of contrast in the means and of opposition in the products, but the power which moves it seems vague, restless, enervated, or counterbalanced by an indefinable force; Nature appears checked in her progress, and as if embarrassed and uncertain.

We believe ourselves to perceive some gleam of light in the abyss if we regard the worlds as spheres of activity, as schools of regeneration where matter, gradually elaborated and subtilised by a principle of life, is destined to pass from the brute or passive condition to that point of exaltation and tenuity which shall at last make it fit to be impregnated with fire and pervaded with light. It will then be employed by intelligence, no longer as formless materials but as a perfected instrument, then like a direct agent, and finally as an essential part of the One Being, who will then become truly Universal and truly One.

The ox is strong and powerful, but he does not know it. He absorbs a vast multitude of vegetation; he devours a meadow. What important advantage does he derive from it? He ruminates, he vegetates sluggishly in the stable where he is immured by a man heavy, melancholy, useless as himself. The man will slay the ox, will eat it and will not be better off, and after the ox is dead the man himself will die. What then will remain of both? A handful of fertilising matter which will produce new grass to nourish other flesh. What a vain and uneloquent alternation of life and death! How cold an universe! Where can be the advantage of existing rather than existing not?

But if this silent and terrible fermentation which seems to beget only to immolate, to make only to unmake, to bring forth germs only to squander them, or to impart the consciousness of life only to inflict the quivering of the death

struggle; if this force which moves eternal matter amidst the darkness casts also some gleams to show forth the light; if this power which offers battle to inertia and gives promise of existence, pulverises the work of its hands to prepare it for some grand design; if this world wherein we appear is only the first sketch of a world; if that which is foretells only that which shall be, then the astonishment which visible evil excites in us may perhaps seem to be explained. The present toils for the future and the order of the world is that the actual world shall be consumed; this great sacrifice was necessary, and is great in our eyes alone. We pass away in the hour of disaster, but it is unavoidable, and the history of all that exists to-day is summed up in the one word that they have lived. A fruitful and invariable order will be the product of the agonising crisis which destroys ourselves. The work is already begun, and the ages of life will subsist when we our complaints, our hopes and our systems will have passed away for ever.

Such was the feeling of the ancients, who preserved the belief in the distress under which the whole earth labours. This vast and profound idea produced the institutions of the earlier ages which endure in the memory of the nations as a great monument of sublime sadness. But tribes which remained barbarous, and hordes collected by fugitives who had forgotten the antique traditions during their forest wanderings—the Pelasgi, the Scythians, the Scandinavians—spread Gothic doctrines, fictions of verse-makers and the false magic of the savages; subsequently the history of things has become their enigma till the day when a man, cut off only too early, set himself to rend some part of the veil which had been spread by the barbarians.

So runs my reverie; but at length some movement distracts me, my attitude changes, and the train of thought passes away.

At other times I find myself in an indefinable situation—I neither sleep nor wake, and there is something pleasant in this dubious condition. I am prone to the mingling and confusing of the ideas of the day with those of slumber. Frequently I preserve something of the soft agitation which is left by a vivid, terrible, or singular dream filled with those mysterious correspondences and that picturesque incoherence which entertain imagination.

The genius of man awake falls short of that which the caprices of night-time present to him. A short time ago I beheld a volcano in eruption, but never was the terror of a volcano so grand, so affrighting, so beautiful. I looked on from some high situation; it was, I think, the window of a palace, and there were many persons about me. It was night, but the night was illuminated. The moon and Saturn shone in the sky between scattered clouds driven rapidly; all things else were calm. Saturn seemed near to the earth and larger than the moon, while his ring, white as molten metal, lighted up the vast, cultivated and crowded plain. Far off, but clearly distinguishable, a long chain of snowy mountains, high-uplifted and uniform, seemed to join plain and sky. I looked closer. A terrific wind blew over the country and swept away all signs of cultivation, of dwellings, of forests, leaving in a moment nothing but a desert of burning sand, red and enkindled, as it were, by some interior fire. Then the ring of Saturn dropped from the planet, slid through the heavens, and, descending with ominous swiftness, touched the high, snowy peaks, which, shaking to their base, rose up and quivered to and fro like enormous waves of a sea moved by the quaking of the entire globe. Yet a few moments, and flames burst forth from the summits of these white billows, leaping towards heaven, then falling back and flowing in burning tides. The mountains were pallid or enkindled according as they

rose or sank down in their mournful movement, and all this great disaster was accomplished in the midst of a silence more mournful still.

Most likely you will think that amidst this ruin of a world I woke up full of horror before the catastrophe occurred, but my dream did not finish in accordance with the rules. As a matter of fact it went on, while the flames burnt themselves out and a great calm followed. Then darkness supervened; we closed the windows of the palace, fell to talking in the saloon on the subject of fireworks, and my dream continued.

I have heard it said more than once that our dreams depend on things which have impressed us during the course of the day preceding. I fully admit that, in common with our ideas and sensations, they are composed only of things that are already familiar, of which we have already had experience, but I think that the mode of their composition has frequently no other relationship with the past. All that we can imagine is fabricated only from that which is, but we dream, as we imagine, new things and things which frequently have no discernible connection with what we have seen previously. Some dreams return constantly in the same manner, identical to their smallest details, without our having thought of them during the intervals between their recurrence. I have seen in sleep more beautiful scenes than any which I have ever imagined, and I have always seen them the same. From my infancy upwards, I have found myself during sleep, in the vicinity of one of the chief towns of Europe; the aspect of the place differed essentially from that of the country really surrounding the capital, which I have never seen, and every time I have dreamed that I was travelling towards this town I have found the scene such as I first dreamed it, and not such as it is.

Again some twelve or fifteen times I have dreamed of a place in Switzerland which I knew prior to my dreaming, but whenever I visit it in sleep it differs altogether from reality, yet is always the same as I saw it for the first time in that condition.

Some weeks ago I beheld a delightful valley, so perfectly in accordance with my tastes that I doubt if such a place can exist. Last night I visited it again, and there met an old man, quite alone, who was eating mouldy bread at the door of a miserable little hut. "I have been waiting for you," he said, "and knew that you were certain to come; in a few days I shall be no more, and you will find change here." Subsequently we embarked on the lake in a small boat which he caused to turn round and round, casting himself at last into the water. I also sank to the bottom, was drowned, and woke up.

Fonsalbe pretends that a dream like this must be prophetic, and that I shall really see the identical lake and valley. In order that the dream may be accomplished we have made up our minds that, should we come across such a place, I shall go on the water, provided that the boat is properly constructed, the lake calm, and no old man to be seen.

LETTER LXXXVI

IMENSTRÔM, *November* 16 (IX).

Your shrewdness has not failed to perceive what, for my own part, I have scarcely so much as hinted. You conclude thence that I consider myself destined for a celibate, and I must confess that he who anticipates that destiny is very near to incurring it.

Seeing that the impulsion of life is lost when stripped of its most ingenuous falsities, I think with you that more may

be spent than gained by standing too much on the defensive, by avoiding that hazardous bond which promises so many delights and occasions so much of bitterness. Domestic life without it is void and cold, above all for the sedentary man. Happy is he who is neither condemned to live solitary, nor to regret that he is not alone.

I find nothing that can be honestly denied or disputed in your observations regarding marriage. That to which I should take exception is that precisely to which you make no reference. I hold it as proven that men ought to marry, yet that which is duty under one aspect may become madness, folly, or crime under another. It is not so easy to conciliate the several principles which rule our conduct. The celibate in general is justly recognised as an evil, but that any given individual can be blamed for adopting this state is altogether another question. It is true that to say this is equivalent to defending myself, and that anything which I advance tends to excuse me in my own eyes, but can it signify that the cause is mine so long as it is good? In its favour I have only to make a single observation, and it seems to me one the justice of which is evident. I am fortunate in making it to you who, on a certain memorable evening, would have openly contested with me the necessity of a reformation designed to bring unity, harmony and simplicity within the range of our duties; to you who charged me with exaggeration when I argued that it was more difficult and less common to have sufficient discernment to recognise duty than to find adequate strength for following it. You had on your side a formidable array of authorities, ancient and modern; on mine there were equally great, and on this point the best of intentions may well have betrayed a Solon, a Cicero and even others.

Our moral code is presumed to be complete, and there

remains therefore nothing to say to mankind except to direct them to obey it; take their good faith for granted, and it must follow that they will be always just. But for myself I am so unfortunate as to think that such a code still remains to be made. I am one among those who discern contradictions therein, the prolific sources of incertitude and I sympathise with those upright persons who are more embarrassed in the choice than weak as regards its execution. I have met with cases over which I defy any man, however uninfluenced by personal considerations, to pronounce without hesitation, and about which the most skilled moralist will never decide as quickly as it may often be necessary to act.

But among all these difficult cases, I will lay stress only on one; it is that over which I must clear myself, and I therefore return to it. The happiness of a woman must be guaranteed, and that of her children prepared; and hence all must be arranged so that there may be certitude, or at least a strong probability, on this point. We owe it also to ourselves and to the rest of our future duties to make sure of our ability to fulfil them, and consequently the likelihood of being in a position which permits such fulfilment, or at least offers us the modicum of happiness necessary to the utilisation of life. It is both an error and an imprudence to choose a woman who will fill our days with disorder, disgust, or opprobrium, one who must be cast off or abandoned, or one with whom all mutual felicity will be impossible. It is a mistake to give birth to beings for whom we can probably do nothing. We must be reasonably assured—if not of our ability to leave them in an independent position—that we can at least equip them with the moral advantages of education, and the opportunity of being something, of fulfilling in society a position neither sordid nor dishonest.

In the course of a journey it is difficult to choose our lodging for the night in advance, and we therefore make shift with any inn that we meet with; but at least you take care in selecting your more permanent abode, and would hesitate to fix yourself for life, or purchase an estate, without ascertaining whether you are likely to be suited. For all the more reason you will not make a choice at hazard which is of much higher importance, not in itself alone but because it is irrevocable.

An absolute or chimerical perfection must not, of course, be aspired to; we must not seek in another for that which we dare not pretend to offer them ourselves, and pass judgment on that which offers itself with so much severity as to preclude us from attaining what we seek. But shall we approve for all that of the impatient man who casts himself into the first comer's arms, and in three months will be compelled to break with the companion thus inconsiderately chosen, or to debar himself through all his life from a true union so as to perpetuate one that is false.

These difficulties in marriage are not the same for all; they are special in a sense to a certain class of men, and in that class are frequent and great. We are answerable for the destiny of another, are subject to a multitude of considerations, and it may so chance that circumstances permit no reasonable choice up to the age when none can be expected.

LETTER LXXXVII

November 20 (IX).

How great is the confusion of life, and how difficult is the art of self-conduct therein! What disappointments follow on well-doing, what disorders after sacrificing all to order, what troubles through seeking to regulate e
when our destiny refused all law!

You will scarcely imagine what I am introducing by this preamble, but engrossed by Fonsalbe, full of the idea of his weariness, of all that has happened to him and all that must yet befall him, of all which I know or that he has told me, I feel in the presence of an abyss of injustice, aversion, remorse and, more deplorable in this sequence of miseries, I see nothing which in itself is surprising and nothing that is peculiar to him. Were it possible to know all secrets, to penetrate the concealed places of the heart and perceive the bitterness which fills it, our contented men, our pleasant homes, our cheerful circles would be nothing but a multitude of unfortunates striving with the chain which binds them, and swallowing the troubled lees of that cup of suffering to which they can see no bottom. All their sufferings they veil, all their false joys they magnify, striving to display them before jealous eyes for ever vigilant of others. They take up a position of vantage, so that the tears which fill their eyes may impart to them an apparent glitter, to be envied at a distance as if they were the expression of pleasure.

The pretence of happiness fills the first place among social vanities. Each man feigns to sympathise with all, but poses in such a way as to invite felicitations from all. Should he speak of his troubles to a confidant, his eye, his lip, his demeanour all indicate suffering, and despite the force of his character, deep sighs accuse his lamentable destiny, while his behaviour is that of a man whose only resource is death. Yet immediately a stranger enters, you observe that his head is thrown up, his brow lightens, his eye is steady, he creates the impression of a man who is not to be subdued by adversities, of one who sports with fate and can pay the price of his pleasures. There is nothing, even to his necktie, that is not arranged in a smarter manner; he moves like a man who, under

emotion of felicity, defers to the greater findings of his destiny.

This vain parade, this passion for seemly exteriors, is unknown only to fools, and almost everybody is the dupe of it notwithstanding. The entertainment from which you are absent appears enjoyable, though that which you are actually attending is only an additional burden. You speak of another as possessing a hundred advantages, and if you are told that your own equal or exceed them, you reply that it may seem so, but— O deluded man, has he not also these *buts?* Each of these fortunate persons appears with his company face, even as the common people come out in their Sunday clothes. In garret and closet, the wretchedness remains behind all the same. Joy, or at least patience, may be seen on the lip; discouragement, sufferings, the frenzy of passion and weariness are in the depth of the lacerated heart. The exterior of all this vast concourse is artifice; it may be brilliant—it is at least supportable—but it is frightful within. It is on such conditions that we have earned the possibility of hope. Unless we thought that others were better placed than ourselves, and that hence an improvement is possible in our own condition, which of us would drag on to the end of his imbecile days?

Actuated by a project which was well planned and promising, if a little romantic, Fonsalbe set out for Spanish America. He was delayed at Martinique by an incident of a bizarre kind which, though it promised to be short, had nevertheless, prolonged consequences. Compelled at length to abandon his previous designs, he decided on the return voyage and only waited opportunity. A distant relative, with whom he was staying in the Antilles, fell ill, and died at the end of a few days. On his death-bed he gave Fonsalbe to understand that his last consolation would be to be-

queath him his daughter, whose happiness, he believed, would be assured in this manner. Fonsalbe, who had given her no thought, objected that as they had lived for six months in the same house without having formed any special intimacy he had no doubt that he was and must remain indifferent in her eyes. The father, persisting, assured him that his daughter was disposed to love him, and had confessed it when refusing to contract another marriage. Fonsalbe, though he protested no longer, still hesitated in his own mind. For his defeated projects he substituted that of filling, amiably and honourably, the duties of an obscure life, insuring the happiness of a woman, and begetting children early in order to form their character. He imagined that the defects of the lady designed for him were those of education only, and that her good qualities were natural. So he decided, and passed his word. The father died, as I have said; some months elapsed, the son and daughter arranged to divide the property which was left to them. A war was being waged in the islands, and the ships of the enemy were cruising in the vicinity. An attack was expected, and under this pretext the future brother-in-law of Fonsalbe arranged everything for a sudden departure, when necessary, to a place of security; but during the night he repaired to the fleet with all the negroes of the plantation, carrying everything portable with him. It was ascertained afterwards that he had settled in an island belonging to the English, where he had fallen upon evil days.

Thus despoiled, his sister seemed fearful that Fonsalbe might abandon her in spite of his promise. Thereupon he precipitated the marriage for which he had been waiting the consent of his family; but such a suspicion, to which he condescended to make no answer, was ill-calculated to increase his esteem for a woman, whom he thus took to

himself without any opinion good or bad concerning her, or any other sentiment than an ordinary friendship.

It is quite possible for a union without love to be a happy one, but their characters were in little agreement; they had, however, something in common, and it is in such a case that love would, I think, avail to bring them wholly into unison. Reason would have been possibly a sufficient impulse, but its full action is only in the heart of order, and their condition was opposed to a consistent and regulated life. . . .

We live once only, and naturally we cling to our system, when it is at the same time that of reason and of the heart. We feel warranted in venturing on the good which will never be accomplished if we wait for certainties. Whether you will look at it from my point of view I do not know, but Fonsalbe, I think, did well. He has been punished for it, but this was of necessity; but was he therefore in the wrong? If we have only once to live. . . . Ah real duty! Sole consolation of a fleeting existence! Sacred morality! Wisdom of the heart of man! He has broken none of your laws. He has put away some few transitory notions, he has ignored our petty conventions. The custom of a corner of the world, the legislation of a suburb would condemn him; but those men of antiquity whom we have revered for three thousand years, those just and great men, they assuredly would have acted, and did act, as he has.

The more I know of Fonsalbe, the more I see that we are destined to remain together. We have decided to do so, and the nature of things settled it before ourselves. I am glad that he has no profession. Here he will fill your place, so far as it is possible for a new friend to succeed one of twenty years' standing, so far as I can find in my present condition one shadow of our ancient dreams.

The intimacy between Fonsalbe and myself outstrips the

progress of time, and has already the venerable character of antiquity. His confidence is boundless, and as he is naturally very prudent and reserved, you may think how I value it. I owe him a great deal; my life is something less useless, and it bids fair to become peaceful despite this interior weight which he can at times cause me to forget, though he cannot remove it. He has restored to my deserts something of their enchanting beauty and of the romance of their Alpine scenes; an unfortunate, a friend, finds some sweet hours among them which before he did not know. We take our walks in company, we discourse, we roam at random, and we are well off when together. Day by day I see plainer what hearts, by a contrary destiny, may be concealed among men who do not know them, and in an order of things where they were each in search of one another.

Fonsalbe has lived sadly amidst perpetual disquietude, and enjoying nothing. He is two or three years my senior, and he feels that life is slipping by. I have told him: "The past is stranger to us than the existence of some unknown being; nothing of reality remains to it; the memories which it leaves are too empty to be counted as good or evil by a wise man. What ground can there be for complaints or regrets about that which is no more? Had you once been the happiest of men, would the present time be better on that account? Had you suffered the most dreadful evils—" He did not interrupt me, but I paused of my own accord. I felt that if he had lived for ten years in a damp cellar it must have permanently affected his health; that moral sufferings leave also ineffaceable impressions; and that when a man of sense deplores the misfortunes which he has apparently ceased to experience, it is in r
their manifold consequences which he is bewailir

When the opportunity of a good action has b

tarily allowed to escape, it is not usually met with a second time, and those whose nature is to do good are thus visited for their negligence when the considerations of the moment or the interests of their passions prevent them. With this natural disposition some of us combine a rational determination to follow it and the habit of silencing every opposing appetite; their sole intention, their prime desire, is in every respect to fill well the part of man, and to do what they judge to be good. Can they witness without regret the withdrawal of every possibility of laudably accomplishing things which, belonging only to private life, are yet important, because so few men have any thought of performing them well?

It is no small part of life, however narrow and secondary it may be considered, to fulfil in respect of one's wife not only what is prescribed by duty, but all that is counselled or permitted by an enlightened reason. Great public functions are occupied honourably by many persons who would be incapable of acting in private as Fonsalbe would have done if his wife had been just in mind and stable in character, so qualified, in a word, as to follow his trend of thought.

The pleasures of confidence and familiarity are very great among friends, but when vitalised and increased by all those details which the sense of the distinction of sex occasions, such delicate pleasures are unlimited. Is there a more delightful domestic condition than that of being good and just in the eyes of a beloved woman; doing all things for her and exacting nothing in return; expecting only what is natural and upright on her part, but pretending to nothing that is exclusive; rendering her worthy of all esteem, and yet leaving her to her own initiative; sustaining, counselling and protecting, but not ruling and not enslaving; making her a friend who not only conceals nothing but has nothing to conceal, without forbidding her things

which become therefore indifferent, but which others would and ought to silence and to interdict; making her more perfect and at the same time more untrammelled than she could otherwise be; possessing all rights over her in order to confer upon her all freedom that an upright soul can accept, and compassing thus, at least in the obscurity of our life, the felicity of a human being who is fitted to receive happiness without corrupting it, and liberty of mind without being thereby corrupted?

LETTER LXXXVIII

IMENSTRÔM, *November* 30 (IX).

Here is the season of the year when it would be pleasant to write trifles for five or six hours at a stretch, to chat over insignificant things, to read clever parodies, in a word, to kill time. For several days past I have been more in this mood than ever, and you would stand a chance of the longest letter which has as yet been received at Bordeaux, if I had not to measure with Fonsalbe the fall of a tiny streamlet which he wishes to deflect towards the highest region of my meadows. It issues from a small glacier, and therefore no drought can affect it. I can, however, find time to tell you that the sky is precisely as I expected.

There is no occasion for waiting on the part of those who live as it suits them, of those who accept Nature only after the manner that they have arranged it, and are the men among mankind. The seasons, the time of day, the aspect of the heavens, to them all these are foreign. Their habits are like a monastic rule, constituting another law which studies itself alone. In natural law they recognise no superior order, but simply a sequence of almost pe incidents, a succession of means or impedime

must be adapted or overcome according to the fantasia of circumstances. Without deciding whether this is an evil or not, I confess that it ought not to be otherwise. Public matters, and almost all kinds of affairs, have their times settled far in advance; they exact at a fixed epoch the solicitude of many men, and it is difficult to see that they could follow other conventions than those which are set apart for them. This necessity involves the rest; the city man, who is no longer dependent on natural events, and may even discover that they weary him—or if they serve him, that it is only by chance—decides, and that almost inevitably, to regulate his habits by his condition, in accordance with the general custom and the opinion of the class to which he belongs, or to which his ambition aspires.

A large city always wears much about the same aspect; its occupations or amusements are always pretty well alike, and a uniform way of living is voluntarily assumed therein. It would, in fact, be not a little inconvenient to rise before morning when the days are long, or to retire early to rest in December. To see the dawn is pleasant and salubrious in itself, but what next could one turn to after looking at it between the roofs, and after having heard a couple of canaries suspended from a skylight salute the rising sun? A fair heaven, a mild temperature, a night made brilliant by the moon can effect no change in your manner; you end by asking, What is the use of it? And even while acknowledging that there must be an evil side to the order which prompts the question, it must be admitted that he who asks it is not altogether in the wrong. It would be eccentric at the least to arouse the hall-porter suddenly, and rush out early in the morning to hear sparrows chirping on the boulevard; or sitting down at the window of a drawing-room, behind the curtains, so as to be isolated from

the glare and noise, to devote a moment to Nature, and observe with recollection the stars of night shining in the street puddles.

But in my Alpine ravine the day of eighteen hours differs considerably from the day that is of nine hours. Some habits of the city have clung to me, because I find them pleasant and even desirable for one who is unable to assume all that are native to the place; nevertheless, with four feet of snow and twelve degrees of frost, I cannot live actually in the same manner as when the drought kindles the pines in the woodland, and cheeses are made five thousand feet up above me.

One special quality of bad weather is necessary for me to work out of doors, one also for walking, another for riding, and yet another for sitting by the fire—though, as a fact, it is not cold—and one, in fine, for settling myself in the chimney-corner of the kitchen, amidst certain domestic operations which I reserve, as far as possible, especially for those days. You will note that, with a view of imparting my whole plan, I include what I shall put in practice in the future with what I may be now doing; I assume that I have already followed my mode of life along the lines that I am actually starting it, in the way that I am arranging it for future seasons and for things which remain to do.

Of the fine days I dare not speak. To be candid, however, I have very little use for these, or rather, I have ceased to have a use for them. Lovely weather adorns the country, and seems therein to augment existence; such at least is the general experience. But for myself, I am the more discontented when it is the more beautiful. Once I struggled vainly against this inward discomfort, but did not prove the stronger; subsequently I adopted another and much more convenient course; I have eluded the evil which I could not destroy. Fonsalbe condescends

quite cheerfully to my weakness: the moderate excesses of the table are set aside for these unredeemed days, so beautiful in all eyes, so overwhelming in my own. There are to be periods of indolence, starting late and passing amidst artificial lights. If anything readable is chanced on, anything with a flavour of drollery, it is reserved for such mornings, and we are shut up after dinner in the society of wine or weak punch. In the freedom of familiarity, in the security of the man who has nothing to fear from his own heart, finding all else, even friendship itself, occasionally insufficient, eager to try a little of that folly which we have left without becoming wise, we seek the active and impassioned realisation of the present thing in place of that precise and measured realisation of all things, of that silent thought which chills man and overpowers his weakness.

In this manner midnight comes, and one is delivered —yes, is delivered from time, from time priceless and irreparable, which it is so often impossible not to lose and more often impossible to love.

When the brain has been deranged by imagination, observation, study, by revulsions and passions, by habits, possibly by reason itself, do you think that it is an easy matter to have always sufficient time, and, above all, never to have too much? We are, it is true, solitaries, rustics, but we have our eccentricities notwithstanding; we are in the midst of Nature, but we observe her. Furthermore, I believe that, even in the savage state, many men have too much soul not to weary themselves.

We have lost the pastimes of a well-chosen society, and we pretend to be consoled for this by reflecting on the weariness, the futile and unavoidable constraints of society in general. Could one not, at the same time, have avoided seeing any one but intimate acquaintances? What shall we substi-

tute for that manner which women alone can possess, which they have in the capitals of France, of that manner which they make so felicitous, and which in turn renders them equally necessary to the man of taste and to the man of passion? Therein is our solitude profound, and therein we are as in the desert void.

In other respects I should think that our way of living is practically the one which most employs our time. We have abandoned the turmoil of the town; the silence which encompasses us seems at first to impart a constancy and inflexibility to the hours which would be depressing to the man accustomed to the methods of a rapid life. Insensibly, and by a change in regimen, one becomes somewhat inured to it. By attaining calmness the days prove very little longer here than elsewhere. If I had not a hundred reasons, some substantial, the rest rather trivial, for not living like a mountaineer, I should have shared his hardy and frugal life. Without agitation, without hope, without desire, without initiative, imagining nothing, thinking scarcely of anything, wishing for nothing further, never dreaming of anything new, I should pass from one season to another, and from this day to old age, as one passes long days in the winter without perceiving their continuous dwindling. When the night came I should conclude merely that lights were wanted, and when the snows began I should judge that the fires must be started. From time to time I should get some intelligence of you, and I should put down my pipe for a moment to reply that I was well. I should grow contented, I should begin to find that days were swallowed up rapidly enough in the cold t quillity of the Alps, and I should lapse slowly into sequence of incuriosity, oblivion, tardiness, wherein man of the mountains reposes amidst the al these mighty solitudes.

LETTER LXXXIX

IMENSTRÔM, *December* 6 (IX).

I have wished on the day itself to send you news of this moment, once desired so much, and one which might mark a new era in my life, had I come back fully from my dreams, or it may be, if I had lost nothing of my errors. Now I am entirely at home; all the work is over. The time has at last come for an orderly arrangement of life which will occupy some hours and cause other hours to be forgotten. Now I can do as I wish; the only misfortune is that I am not quite sure of that which I ought to do.

Ease, all the same, is a pleasant thing. Everything can then be arranged, convenience studied, all chosen and regulated. Given easy circumstances, the misfortunes of ordinary life can be avoided by reason. Rich people would be happy if they possessed ease, but they prefer bringing themselves to poverty. I sympathise with those who are driven by the tyranny of circumstance to increase their establishments to the extreme limit of their resources. Domestic happiness is impossible without the moderate superfluity which is necessary to a sense of security. If greater peace and better temper are found in cabins than in palaces, it is because comfort is more uncommon in the palace than it is in the cabin. Amidst all their wealth the unfortunates do not know how to live! Had they been capable of restricting their pretensions and those of their families, all would have been theirs, for money offers all, but in hands so thoughtless it can accomplish nothing. So, however, they are determined to have it, and they must follow their bent. Be it our part, at least, to furnish other examples in the midst of our mediocrity!

To avoid being truly unhappy, one condition only

is requisite; it is named reason, wisdom, or virtue. For contentment I believe that four conditions are necessary: the full possession of reason, health, some fortune and a modicum of that happiness which is afforded by the control of our own destiny. It is true that the last three are void in the absence of reason, and that reason counts for much without them. It may either provide those later on, or, at the worst, console us for their loss, but it cannot be imparted by them, and even what they give without it has only an external splendour, a mere seeming and show which cannot long deceive the heart. With capability and knowledge, let it be admitted that we are well off on this earth. Capability without knowledge is highly dangerous, and knowledge in the absence of capability is useless and distressing.

As for me, who make no pretence to live, but simply observe life, I shall do well to take refuge in at least imagining the part of a man. I propose to spend four hours daily in my study, and this I shall term working, though it is not all the same, for it is forbidden to turn a key or to hem a handkerchief on the day of rest, but it is allowable to do a chapter of the "Primeval World." As I have made up my mind to write, I should be inexcusable if I did not now set about it. All that I require is at my command—leisure, quietude, a small but sufficient library, and, in place of a secretary, a friend to see that I persevere and to testify that it is possible by writing to do some good sooner or later.

Before occupying myself with the weakness of men, I must for the last time speak to you of my own. Fonsalt from whom I have no other secrets, but who has no inkli of this one, makes me daily conscious, both by his prese and by our conversations, in which the name of his recurs so frequently, how far off I have be forgetfulness which is my sole refuge.

He has mentioned me in his letters to Madame D——, and has seemed to do so at my instance. I saw no way to prevent it, as I could give no reason to Fonsalbe, but I am the more sorry, because she must think it contradictory that I am failing to act in the way that I have myself laid down.

Do not regard as fantastic the bitterness which I find in these memories and the fruitless pains which I take to dispel them, as if I were not sure of myself. I am neither fanatical nor vacillating in my rectitude. My intentions remain under my control, but not so are my thoughts, and if I have all the assurance of the man who wills what he ought, I have also all the weakness of one who has resolved nothing. Yet I protest against the suggestion that I am in love; I am too unhappy for that. How can I explain? . . . It would be impossible for you to understand me, as I do not understand myself.

It is now many years since I saw her, but fated to possess only the dream of my existence, the only consequence was that her memory became bound up with the consciousness of the continuity of my being. So much for those times whereof all is lost.

The need of love became existence itself, and the consciousness of things was but expectation and presentiment of that hour which heralds the light of life. But if in the vapid course of my days there had been one found which seemed to offer the sole good that Nature then held for my heart, that memory was within me to drive me from it. Without having actually loved, I found myself disqualified for love henceforth, like those men in whom a profound passion destroys the power of experiencing a fresh affection. This memory was not love, since I had no consolation therein, and no sustenance; it left me in the void, and seemed to retain me therein; it gave me nothing, and seemed to oppose anything being given me. Hence I

was deprived both of the delicious intoxication which love fosters, and of that bitter yet voluptuous melancholy in which our hearts elect to be consumed when they are filled with an ill-starred love. I have no desire to recount the wearisome story of my weariness. I have buried my disastrous fortune in my deserts; she would win away that which surrounds me, she very nearly involved you. You have sought to forsake all and become dejected and useless as I am, but I have forced you to return to your distractions. You have even believed that I have found some for myself; I have quietly encouraged your error. You know my calm resembled the smile of despair; I could have wished you to be deceived longer. I chose a time of jest to write to you . . . when I laughed with pity at myself, my fate, many things about which men groan, while repeating that they are coming to an end.

I am telling you far too much, but I am excited and overwhelmed by the feeling of my destiny. There is nothing that I can seek for in myself without meeting the ghost of that which will be never granted me. In speaking to you of her, I can never be anything but myself. I do not know in what sense I should exercise reserve as to this. She felt even as myself; we spoke a common language; are those who understand each other so numerous? All the same, I did not yield to such manifold illusions. I reiterate that I do not wish you to dwell upon times which should be buried in oblivion and are already in the abyss. The dream of joy has passed with their phantoms in the death of man and the ages. Why do these memories rise from that which has been dead so long? To diffuse over the living remnants of man the bitterness of the universal sepulchre into which he must go down. I have no thought of justifying to you this bruised heart, with which you are but too familiar, which,

amidst its ruins, preserves nothing but the unrest of life. You know well, and you alone, its extinct hopes, its inexplicable desires, its immeasurable wants. Seek not, on your part, to excuse it; sustain it rather, upraise its fragments; restore to it, if you have the power, the fire of life, the calm of reason, all the impulse of genius, all the impassibility of the wise. I would never wish you to pity its unsearchable follies.

At length, by an unexpected chance, I met her in the vicinity of the Saone, on a day of sadness. Simple in itself, this event astonished me notwithstanding. It was sweet to see her occasionally. An ardent soul, tranquil, fatigued, disillusionised, immense, must settle the disquiet and unceasing torment of my heart. The grace of her whole being, the inexpressible refinement in her voice, her every motion. . . . Bear in mind that I do not love her, and realise all my woe.

But my dejection grew more constant and more bitter. If Madame D—— had been free, I should then have had the satisfaction of being wretched after my own manner, but she was not, and I withdrew before it became impossible for me to support elsewhere the burden of time. Then did all things weary me, but now all are indifferent. It may be even that a few things amuse me; I could then talk to you of all this. I am no longer meant for love, I am extinct. I might make a good husband, for my power of attachment is considerable. I begin to think of the pleasures of love, I am no longer worthy of a mistress. Love himself could not give me more than a wife and a friend. How our affections change! How the heart stultifies itself! How life passes uncompleted!

I told you then how much I loved to be wearied in her company of all which makes up the delights of life; better far did I like the quiet evenings. But that could not last.

At times, though rarely, I forget that I am on earth as a shadow walking up and down, seeing but grasping nothing. Such is my doom; when I have sought to escape it, I have been visited. When an illusion begins my woes increase. I have felt very near to happiness and I have been alarmed. Perhaps these ashes that I believe extinct could yet be rekindled. It was necessary to depart.

And now I am in a desert valley. I seek to forget how to live. I have taken refuge in tea to compose me, and in wine to distract me. I build, I grow, and in all this I seek some distraction. I have come across a few good people, and I propose to frequent the tavern in search of men. I rise and retire late, I am slow over eating, I busy myself with things of all kinds, I try all positions, I love the night and I make the time fly; I get rid of my cold hours and long to see them in the past.

Fonsalbe is her brother. We speak of her; I cannot prevent it, for he is very fond of her. Fonsalbe will be my friend, it is my wish; he also is very lonely. I wish it on my own account; what would become of me without him? But he will never know how much the idea of his sister is present in these solitudes. These darksome gorges! These romantic waters! They were voiceless, they will be ever so! This idea does not invest them with the peace of forgetfulness of the world, but the abandonment of deserts. We stood one evening beneath the pines; their waving tops were filled with the rumours of the mountain; we spoke, he wept about her! But a brother has tears.

I make no resolutions, I give no pledges; I despise [illegible] protestations which are so vain, this eternity which [illegible] deems that he can add to his passions of a day. I [illegible] nothing, I know nothing, all passes, all men change [illegible] either I deceive myself greatly or it will never [illegible] love. When the devotee has dreamed of his [illegible]

answer. A fanciful semi-daylight, an airy veil, a kind of mist enveloped her, giving to her form a vagueness which dissolved the suggestion of drapery. It brought a perfume of ideal beauty, a voluptuous illusion, with an instant of inconceivable reality. It is true, therefore, I said to myself, when I was a couple of paces away; this attachment has a trace of passion, and the yoke has existed. From such weakness other incertitudes have followed. Those years are past recall, but to-day is still free; to-day is still my own.

After a word to Fonsalbe, I absented myself. I took my way to the upper part of the valley, walking almost noiselessly in my deep preoccupation. In spite of the unmistakable warning which had come to me, the illusion persisted, and the strength of the past seemed invincible. All those dreams of loving and of being alone no longer flowed over me in the peaceful obscurity of a desert place. There was even a moment when I could have exclaimed, like many others whose weakness I have often censured: To possess her and to die!

Notwithstanding, to realise in the silence that to-morrow all things on earth may end means also to estimate with a surer glance how the gifts of life have been used, and what ought to be done with them. What I have done with them! Still young, I pause at the fatal moment. She and the desert—that would indeed be the heart's triumph. But no—forgetfulness of the world, and her wanting—such is my law! Toil austere and the future!

I found myself at the bend of the valley, between the rocks where the torrent plunges down and the songs that I had chosen myself just beginning far away. But the simple motion of the air dissolved from time to time these festal sounds, and I knew the moment when they would cease. The torrent, on the contrary, persisted with unvarying force, flowing past, flowing for ever, even as the

centuries. The flight of the water is like the flight of our days. It has been said often, and will be re-echoed after a thousand years: For us the passage of the waters will be ever the most striking image of the inexorable lapse of time. Voice of the torrent sounding in the midst of shadows, only solemn voice under the peace of the heavens, be thou heard alone!

There is nothing serious except that which is permanent. Seen from above, what are all those bonds from which we shall be separated with our last breath? Shall I falter between a chance meeting and the ends of my destiny? between an alluring fancy and the just, the generous employment of the powers of thought? Shall I stoop to the idea of an imperfect bond, of an affection void of object, of a blind pleasure? Am I not acquainted with the promise which she made to her family when she became a widow? That promise forbids a complete union; the question is therefore simple, and it should not detain me. What could there be worthy of man in the deceptive pastime of a barren love? To consecrate the faculties of life to mere pleasure is to deliver one's self to eternal death. Feeble as those faculties are, I am answerable concerning them: they must bear their fruits. I will preserve these benefits of existence; I will honour them. I will not suffer myself at least to grow weak within until the inevitable moment. O depths of space! are we permitted to behold you in vain? The majesty of the night is repeated from age to age: woe unto every soul who finds delight in servitude!

Are we made to enjoy here the rapture of desires? The expectation over, the success achieved, what have we to say for the satisfaction of a few brief days? If this be the sum of life, it is nothing. A year, ten years of pleasure—this is a futile amusement with too swift a bitterness after-

wards! What will remain of those desires when, suffering or foolishly distracted, the later generations are trampling on our ashes! Let us account as little that which dissolves so quickly. Amidst the great comedy of the world, let us seek another heritage; only of our stronger resolutions will some portion perhaps survive. It will be said that man is perishable. It is possible, but let us perish resisting, and if the void await us do not so act as to deserve it!

I fell, as you know, into discouragement, believing that my tendencies were already changed. I was too easily persuaded that my youth was over. But, as I think you remarked subsequently, these differences were caused by errors of regimen, and this has been rectified for the most part. I had observed but indifferently the mobility which characterises me and contributes so much to my uncertainties, is constantly so great an inconstancy, though much more in impressions than in opinions, or even in propensities. Nor is it a part of the progress of the years; it returns to that which it was. My habit of restraining and repressing forthwith all my inward impulses caused me not infrequently to misconstrue oppositions myself. I see now that forty years hence I shall not be more different than I have already been a hundred times between one quarter of an hour and another. So sways the limber summit of a tree on the windy height; if you revisit it in years to come, you will find it still swaying and still after the same manner.

Each incident, each notion which survives, the smallest details, whether opportune or the reverse, a few memories, some slight fears, all these fortuitous emotions, can change for me the aspect of the world, the estimation of our faculties, and the value of our days. Whilst things indifferent are discoursed to me, and I listen with tranquillity and indolence; whilst reproaching myself with my coldness in such

conversations, I am content with those who forgive it me, I have passed frequently from the loathing of this limited existence, disquieted and embarrassed by all, to a not less natural consciousness of the curious variety of things, or the amusing sagacity which invites us to go on enjoying them for a time. It seems to me, notwithstanding, that what offers with so much facility another aspect is less the grand phenomenon in its totality than each consequence which is in relation to us, less the general order than my particular aptitude. This visible order has two aspects; the one attracts, the other perplexes us, but all depends on a certain confidence in ourselves. This I lose continually, and it is reproduced also continually. Weak as we are, how great is the adroitness of our industry! A favourable chance, a softer wind, a gleam of light, the swaying of a flower in blossom, the very dew-drops, tell me that I shall yet set all in order. But the clouds gather, the bullfinch ceases singing, a letter is delayed, a thought ill-expressed in my writing misses its mark; and then I see nothing but obstacles, delays, obstinate resistance, betrayed designs, annoyances for the happy, sufferings for the crowd, and I am myself the sport of the power which overwhelms us all.

Such mobility at least is not calculated to shake the principles of conduct. It does not signify even that the end appears merely as a probability, if only it be unique. Strengthened in one sense, let us not tarry for other lights; we can walk along pathways that have been scarcely explored. So all is decided. I am still as I was; and if I resolve, I shall also be that which I might be. It is a trifle assuredly; but, to sum all, do not let us fall beneath ourselves.

June 30.

I write to you at great length, expressing in many words what I might convey in a few lines, but it is my charac-

teristic, and then also I have plenty of leisure. Nothing engrosses me, nothing takes hold of me; I seem still to be suspended in the void. One day more, as I think, and one only I need. Then the mood will end, for I have determined it; but just now all things seem sad to me. I am not undecided, but moved even to a kind of stupor and lassitude. I continue my letter so that I may lean upon you.

I remained yet awhile by myself, but feeling less alien already to the tranquil harmony of Nature. I joined the party during supper and before the songs had ceased.

Henceforth you need look no longer for inexcusable idleness or the old irresolution on my part. Health and ease are facilities that are by no means invariably united; I possess them and shall make use of them for the future. May this declaration become my rule of life! If I remonstrate with men about their voluntary weakness, is it not desirable that I should indulge in none myself? You know that I had formerly some inclination towards Africa. But at the present time everything has combined to render a design impracticable which, for the rest, would have required further maturing, and now it would be too late to undertake those studies which should have preceded its execution.

What then remains for me to do? I believe definitely that my vocation is writing, nor need you ask on what subjects, or following what model, for, as to the first point, you are practically acquainted with them already, while, as regards the second, I shall assuredly imitate no one, unless in some short passage, and by a kind of caprice. I should consider it exceedingly misplaced to assume the manner of another when I can have one of my own. What purpose does writing serve for him who has no such manner, who, in other words, is never carried away or

inspired? And now as to the question of style, it will neither be severely classical nor inconsiderately free. To deserve being read, it is necessary that all true fitness should be studied. If you ask me who is to be judge, I must answer that it must, I suppose, be myself. Have I not read those authors whose work has been executed with circumspection, as well as those who have written with more of independence? It is for me to make choice of a suitable means according to the measure of my possibilities, having regard, on the one hand, to the nature of my subject, as well as to the age in which I live, and, on the other, to my disposition, without intentionally ignoring admitted rules, but also without expressly considering them. My guarantees of success will be the sole natural guarantees. If it be insufficient to give expression to what is true, and to do so in a convincing manner, I shall fail unavoidably, and there the matter ends. I do not think it indispensable to find approval during one's lifetime, unless, indeed, one is condemned to the misfortune of depending on the pen for a subsistence.

Let those take precedence who seek their laurels in the salon. Pass on, society persons, men of consideration in countries where everything depends upon influence; you who are prolific in the fashionable notions of the day, in the books of a clique, in devices for producing an effect; who, even after adopting everything, leaving everything, then reassuming everything, and exhausting everything, still find something to fill up some indefinite pamphlets, so as to be able to say: Here it is put into words that are expressive and skilfully strung together, even if a trifle hackneyed.—Pass on, I say, deluding and deluded men, for after all you pass quickly, and it is fair that you should have your day. Show yourselves, therefore, to-day in all your skill and prosperity.

May not the utility of a work be reasonably assured without dishonouring it by intrigues to increase the fame of its author? Whether you remain in retreat or even live quietly in a capital, will your name in the end be altogether unknown, will not your book sell gradually out all the same? Whether a certain number of copies are placed with the booksellers, or sent to take their chance among the libraries in the principal towns, sooner or later the production will find its place, and no less surely than if you had solicited commendation.

Thus my task is indicated. It only remains for me to fulfil it, if not with felicity and renown, at least with a certain zeal and dignity. I renounce much, and am almost contented with simply avoiding suffering. With employment, hope and friendship, shall I have cause to complain in retreat? Occupation without overwork contributes essentially to the peace of the soul, the least illusory of all blessings. The need of pleasure is supplanted, for there is enjoyment in simple advantages, just as multitudes of healthy men adapt themselves to the most ordinary viands. Who does not acknowledge that hope is preferable to memories? In this constant flux of our life, it is only the future which is important. What has come to pass has already vanished, and even the present escapes us, unless we can use it as an instrument. Pleasant recollections in the past do not strike me as a considerable advantage, except for weak imaginations which are exhausted after a little quickening. Such persons, having pictured things otherwise than they can be, become infatuated, and when they are disabused by experience, they cease to imagine anything because exaggerated imagination is forbidden them. Veridic fictions being thus, so to speak, interdicted, they must have recourse to glowing memories; otherwise, there is no

thought which can please them. But the man of just and powerful imagination can always form a sufficiently positive idea of different blessings, when fortune leaves him in tranquillity; he is not of those whose knowledge is, in such matters, restricted to what he learned in the past.

Our correspondence and Fonsalbe will remain to me for the daily sweetening of life; these two bonds will suffice me. Even in our letters let us seek for the truth without ponderous dissertations and without headstrong systems: let us call upon the immutable truth. What else can sustain the soul, at times fatigued by its vague hopes, but far more astonished at itself, far more abandoned when it has lost alike the languors and delights of such active uncertainty? Justice at least has its evidence. For the most part you receive the moral lights in peace, I pursue them in my unrest; ours is an abiding union.

LETTER XCI

Without Known Date.

I have never yet recounted the awkward adventure which happened to me on a certain day when I had determined to cross the Italian Alps.

The experience has been vividly brought back by my coming across the following words: It is possible that this life has been granted us only to meet, in spite of our weaknesses, with some opportunities for accomplishing manfully that which the moment demands of us. . . . Thus to employ all our powers to the purpose, without passion and also without fear, is to be man in all truth. This satisfaction is, however, rarely vouchsafed. As for myself, I only half experienced it among those mountains, as it was simply my personal safety that was concerned.

I can only give account of the episode by recourse to details that are altogether personal, as it consisted wholly in these.

I was going to Aosta, and was already in Le Valais, when I heard a stranger remark at the inn that he would not take the risk of crossing Saint-Bernard without a guide. Forthwith I resolved to take it in my own case. I assumed that by observing the disposition of the gorges or the direction of the torrents I could reach the hospice before the muleteers, without information from them.

I left Martigny on foot in the best possible weather. Impatient to come across some impressive scenery, if only beheld from a distance, I walked the more briskly, as above Saint-Branchier I encountered nothing of the kind. On reaching Liddes, I took it for granted that I should pass no other hostelry between there and the hospice itself. At that of Liddes the bread was exhausted and no vegetables could be had. A small piece of mutton alone remained, and this I did not touch. I took very little wine, but that little at such an unaccustomed hour, so inclined me to darkness and rest that I fell asleep under the shelter of some bushes.

When I awoke, being without a watch, I had no idea that I had been several hours in this condition. When I took again to the road, my one hope and intention was to reach my destination. Nature does not always encourage the illusions which she has in store for us notwithstanding. No distraction presented itself, neither beauty in the valleys, the singularity of costumes, nor even the effect of the wonted mountain air. The sky had changed its aspect. Dark clouds enveloped the peaks which I approached, and yet they did not undeceive me as to the time, since at such elevations they often gather very quickly.

A few minutes afterwards snow began falling heavily. I passed the village of Saint-Pierre without inquiring of any

one. I was resolved to pursue my enterprise, in spite of the cold and the want of a beaten track further on. It was absolutely impossible to choose one's way with certainty, nor could I discern the rocks until I came actually in contact with them. Yet this also I referred to the combined darkness of cloud and snow, and I did not realise my situation till night only could account for the increasing gloom.

The rough ice at the foot of which I arrived and the want of any practicable track for mules made it evident that I had missed the way. I came to a pause, intending to reflect at my leisure, but a complete numbness of the arms speedily dissuaded me. While it was impossible to await daylight in the place where I was, it seemed equally out of question to reach the monastery, from which I might be separated by abysses. One course only offered, to be guided by the sound of the water so as to reach the principal stream itself, which, falling from point to point, makes for the last dwellings I had observed in my descent. I was now truly in darkness, and amidst rocks from which extrication would have been difficult even in daylight. But the presence of danger sustained me. I must either perish or get back without loss of time to the village, which would, I reckoned, be nearly three leagues distant.

I scored my first success rather quickly. I came on the torrent, which it was essential that I should quit no more, for if I became entangled in further rocks I might be puzzled how to continue my descent. Worn by the effect of ages, the bed of the Drance must, I thought, prove less rugged, at least in many places, than the tortuous windings of the neighbouring masses of rock. The battle against obstacles now began, and so also the peculiar enjoyment occasioned by the magnitude of the danger. I waded into the turbulent and variable current, resolved to follow

it till the hazardous experiment was either terminated by some serious accident, or till I saw the village lights. I surrendered myself, therefore, to the course of that glacial water. When it fell from the height, I let myself fall with it. On one occasion the drop was so great that I thought the end had come, but a basin of some depth received me. I have no notion how I scrambled out of it. I fancy that when hands failed me my teeth must have clutched some jutting point of stone. As for my eyes, from these I had little help, and I have an idea that I shut them when I anticipated a shock of any extra violence. I pressed onward with an eagerness which no fatigue could check, content apparently to follow a fixed impulse, to sustain a determined effort. As I gradually became inured to this rude progress, to this species of audacity, I forgot the only refuge which I could reach, namely, the village of Saint-Pierre, until a gleam of light revealed it. I beheld it with an indifference which doubtless rose more from want of thought than from true courage, but I struggled as I best could to the inn, where the inhabitants were gathered about the fire. The light of this fire shone through an aperture in the shutter of the little window, and it was to this that I was indebted for my life.

It was the kind of inn that is usually met with in the mountains, and much was naturally wanting, but I found the attentions of which I stood most in need. Placed in the inner angle of the great chimney-corner, which was the principal feature of the house, I passed an hour or more in forgetfulness of that exalted condition and its singular delight which I had experienced. Null and depressed after my deliverance, I did whatever I was required; they gave me mulled wine, unaware that I had far greater need of more solid nourishment.

One of my hosts had seen me scaling the mountai towards the end of the day in a snow-squall of the ki

which is dreaded even by the mountaineers; he had afterwards remarked in the village that a stranger had passed going up, and that it meant destruction at such an hour. When these honest fellows realised that I owed my escape to the defective condition of their shutter, one of them cried in his patois: "My God, that it should be owing to us!"

The next morning they brought me my clothes well dried and tolerably repaired, but I could not shake off a somewhat violent shivering, and in addition to this several feet of snow on the ground made me shrink from continuing my journey without necessity. I spent a portion of the day with the priest of this poor village and stayed with him to dinner, the first meal that I had taken for more than forty hours. On the morrow the snow had melted under the beams of the morning sun; I accomplished without a guide the five arduous leagues, and the feverish symptoms left me in the course of my toil. I had a good welcome at the hospice, but was unfortunately not able to approve of everything. The variety of meats, which, under the circumstances, could not be ascribed to hospitality but rather to refinement, appeared to me out of place. I thought much the same of the chapel; solemn simplicity would have been more suited than embellishments to a church among the mountains. I stayed the night at the little village of Saint-Remi in Italy. The torrent of the Doire breaks against an angle of the hostelry walls. My window was left open, and throughout the night the clamour alternately woke and lulled me to sleep, to my great satisfaction.

Lower down in the valley I came upon some of th
afflicted people, whose enormous goitres ha
on the farther side of Saint-Bernard, when
Le Valais. At a quarter of a league dist

Maurice there is a village which, owing to its unusual situation, is so sheltered from cold winds that laurels and pomegranates flourish through all seasons in the open. This, however, is little heeded by the villagers, who, protected themselves from the frost, and furthermore afflicted by cretinism, vegetate at the foot of their vast rocks, indifferent even as to the passing and repassing of strangers so close at hand across the river. I decided, on returning to Switzerland, to have a nearer view of these people, sunk in such heavy ignorance, poor but unaware of the fact, and enfeebled without actually suffering. I am inclined to think that such unfortunates are happier than ourselves.

Except for the scrupulous exactitude of my narrative, its interest would be so little that even your friendship would fail to discover it. For myself, I recall but too well a fatigue which I did not realise at the time, though it has permanently deprived me of all sureness of foot. Still less am I likely to forget that so far the only two hours of my life in which I was most truly alive, least discontented with myself, least remote from the intoxication of happiness, were those in which, pierced by the cold, outworn with struggles, in direst need, driven from precipice to precipice before I was aware of their existence, and escaping from them alive to my astonishment, I repeated continually to myself, and in my pride to myself only, with no one to hear me: "Still in this moment I wish that which I ought, and I do that which I wish."

Conclusion of an undated letter.

From age to age, how many unfortunates have declared that flowers exist only to conceal our chains, to cheat us all at the beginning and to hold us enslaved to the end. They do more, though perchance to no greater purpose; they seem to hint of that which mortal mind can never fathom.

If flowers were merely beautiful in our eyes, they would still enchant us; but at times we are carried away by their fragrance, as by some happy condition of existence, as by some sudden appeal, some return to the most hidden life. Whether I have gone in search of these unseen emanations, whether, and more often, they have offered themselves, whether they have come upon me by surprise, I accept them as a potent, though uncertain, expression of a thought the secret of which is shut in and hidden by the material world.

Colours have also their own eloquence; all things are possibly a symbol. But scents are more penetrating, possibly because they are more mysterious, and although in the normal relations of life we must have palpable truths, the great motions of the soul have truth of another order for their principle, the essentially true, inaccessible notwithstanding in these our wavering ways.

Jonquil, violet, tuberose—yours are moments only, lest our weakness should be overcome, or perchance that we may be left to the incertitude wherein our spirit works, now full of nobility, and now of discouragement. No, I have never beheld the Cingalese sindrimal, the Persian gulmikek, the pe-ge-hong of Southern China, but the jonquil and the jasmine suffice to make me say that, such even as we are, we might be denizens of a better world.

What would I have? To hope and then hope no more is to be or to cease from being, and of such doubtless is man. But how comes it that after the songs of a deeply moved voice, after the fragrance of flowers and all the longings of imagination, all the ecstasies of thought, still man fails to die?

And it may be, when destiny decrees it, that we shall hear the secret approach of a woman full of loving allure-

ment, and from behind some curtain, but assured that she is wholly visible, in the rays of the setting sun, she shall reveal herself with no other veil, for the first time, retreating precipitately and returning of her own accord, smiling at her voluptuous resolve. Yet in the end we are condemned to grow old. Where now are the violets which bloomed for the old generations?

There are two flowers which, in a sense, seem to bloom in silence and almost devoid of fragrance, but by which I am more attracted than I can say on account of their persistence. The recollections which they awake recall the past vividly, as if such bonds of time heralded happy days. These simple flowers are the field-barbel and the early Easter daisy, the meadow marguerite.

The barbel is the flower of rural life. It must be seen in the liberty of natural leisure, amidst wheatfields, farmyard sounds and crowing of cocks, by the footpaths of the old husbandmen. The sight of it might well lead to tears.

The violet and the meadow-daisy are rivals. They bloom in the same season, with the same simplicity. At the first dawn of springtide we are captivated by the violet; the daisy wins our love year in and year out. They are in the same relation to each other as a painted portrait is to a marble bust. The violet recalls the purest emotion of love; so does love offer itself to clean hearts. But, in the last resource, even love like this, so persuasive and bland, is but a beautiful accident of life. It vanishes, but the peace of the country places is with us to the latest hour. The daisy is the patriarchal symbol of this bland repose.

If I should reach old age, if, on a day, still thought-haunted, but ceasing from speech with men, there should

be a friend at my side to receive my farewell to earth, let my chair be set down on the short grass, may there be peaceful daisies in front of me, beneath the sun, under the vast sky, that in relinquishing this fleeting life I may recall something of the infinite illusion.

NOTES

1. Page lxxx, line 9.—I do not infer from this that a good romance is not a good book. Furthermore, in addition to what I should call true romances, there are agreeable or really meritorious writings which are classed commonly under this head, such as "The Indian Cottage," &c.

2. Page lxxxii, line 17.—The pastoral manner and the descriptive manner include many threadbare expressions, the least tolerable of which, to my mind, are those figures of speech which have been employed some millions of times, and from the very first enfeebled the object which they were intended to exalt. The enamel of the meadows; the azure of the skies; the crystal of the waters; the lilies and roses of a complexion; the pledges of love; the innocence of the hamlet; torrents falling from the eyes; contemplating the marvels of Nature; casting flowers on the tomb; and innumerable others which, though I would not condemn them exclusively, I prefer not to meet.

3. Page lxxxiii, line 8.—Obermann stands in need of some slight interpretation. He is far, for example, from taking up a definite stand as to many questions on which he touches; but possibly he determines more in the continuation of his letters. So far this second portion is entirely wanting.

4. Page 1, line 6.—Chessel, the estate of the person to whom the letters are addressed.

5. Page 8, line 6.—Near Lyons, the peaks of the Alps are visible distinctly on the horizon.

6. Page 9, line 1.—It is credible that the sky of Geneva is much the same as that of the neighbouring districts.

7. Page 9, line 18.—Such a description may be considered as applying to the Alps, but scarcely to Jura.

8. Page 9, line 23.—I have not been surprised at finding in these letters a number of expressions which are a little romanesque. Hearts

which have matured in advance of their due time combine with the sentiment of other days something of that exaggerated and illusory force which characterises the spring season of life. Every being endowed with the faculties of man either is or has been what is called romanesque, yet each after his own manner. Passions, virtues, weaknesses are practically common to all, but they are not alike in all.

9. Page 12, line 24.—The word *Vaud* does not here signify valley; it has a Celtic derivation, to which we owe also the word *Welsh*. The Swiss of the German districts term the *pays de Vaud* Welshland. The Germans designate the Gauls by the word *Wale*, whence come the names of the principality of Wales, of the *pays de Vaud*, of that which is called in Belgium *Walon*, of Gascony, &c.

10. Page 13, line 3.—At the present day it is probable that Obermann would have stopped willingly in the *Canton de Vaud*, and might have regarded it as an agreeable abode.

11. Page 13, line 21.—That of Geneva or Léman, and not Lake Léman.

12. Page 18, line 8.—It would be unjust to affirm this of the entire northern shore.

13. Page 25, line 18.—May it not be said that the application to wisdom of the notion that all is vanity is carrying it to exaggeration? By wisdom we understand that doctrine of the sages which is magnanimous, and yet, at least in a sense, vain. As to the ordered method of passing one's days in receiving and imparting the maximum of possible good, this cannot really be charged with vanity. The object of true wisdom is the occupation of life, the amelioration of our existence, and this existence being all, impermanent and unimportant as it may be thought, it is evident that it is not in such wisdom that Obermann finds error and vanity.

14. Page 27, line 29.—Cicero was in no sense an ordinary and was even a great man; he had very great qualities, very striking talents; he filled a splendid part; he wrote admirably on philosophical subjects; but I do not see that he had the soul of a sage. Obermann was dissatisfied that he possessed the pen of a sage only. He found, moreover, that a statesman has every opportunity to exhibit all his powers, and considered that although he may act wrongly, weakness cannot be forgiven him; that a father of his country has no need to flatter; that vanity is sometimes the almost inevitable resource of those who remain unknown, but that otherwise its existence is to be explained

only by littleness of soul. I suspect him also of feeling that a Roman consul should not have wept with many tears because circumstances compelled his wife to change her abode. Such was probably his line of thought concerning this orator, who was perhaps greater in talents than in genius. For the rest, if his sentiments are interpreted from the point of view adopted in his letters, I fear that I may be deceived, for I observe that I am attributing him my own altogether. I am much pleased that the author of *De Officiis* was successful in the affair of Catiline; but I could have wished that he had proved great in his reverses.

15. Page 36, line 22.—(*Replain.*) This word, which it would be difficult to replace by a more accurate expression, has been adopted here apparently for this reason; being current in the Alps, I have forborne to change it.

16. Page 39, line 14.—Young man, conscious now of the same feelings as Obermann, do not decide hastily that those feelings will undergo no change. You yourself will not suffer alteration, but time will calm you; you will set what is in the place of that which you now love. You will grow weary; you will wish for an easier life; such accommodation is very convenient. You will say: if the race persists, if the individual passes only, it is not worth his while to think for himself or be anxious. You will seek diversions; you will try the pleasures of the table; you will look at the grotesque side of everything; you will smile in private. In your very weariness you will find something of pleasing laxity, and you will pass forgetting that you not have lived. Many have thus passed in the end.

17. Page 43, line 16.—We do not know precisely the commencing point of that which is here termed ether.

18. Page 58, line 11.—We have, for the most part, too narrow ideas concerning the man of sensibility. He is represented as a ridiculous being, and classed with those women who weep at their pet bird's illness, swoon at the sight of blood drawn by a needle-point, and shudder at certain words—such as snake, spider, grave-digger, small-pox, the tomb, or old age. I can picture a certain moderation in that which moves us, a sudden combination of contrary sentiments, a habit of superiority even to the affection which governs us, a gravity of soul and a depth of thought, a breadth which awakens within us the secret perception that Nature would oppose to the visible sensation, a wisdom of the heart amidst its perpetual agitation; in fine, a combination, a harmony of all things which belongs only to a man of vast sensibility:

in his strength he has sounded all that is destined to man, in his moderation he only has known the melancholy of pleasure and the fascination of suffering.

The man who feels warmly and even deeply, but without moderation, squanders this almost supernatural power on things indifferent. I do not say that he will find it no more in the occasions of genius; there are great men in small things who prove great also in great circumstances. Despite their real merit, such characters have two drawbacks; they are regarded as fools not only by those who are themselves unintelligent but by many persons of understanding, and they will be avoided through prudence by those even who can appreciate their worth and may conceive a high opinion concerning them. They debase genius by prostituting it to things that are altogether vulgar, and amidst the lowest of men. They arm the crowd thereby with specious pretexts for claiming that good sense is better than genius, because the errors of the latter are foreign to it; and, what is more fatal, for pretending that upright, strong, expansive, generous men are not superior to those who are prudent, ingenious, regular, invariably cautious and often self-seeking.

19. Page 63, line 19.—Mont Righi is near Lucerne; the lake is at the foot of these perpendicular rocks.

20. Page 68, line 7.—Doubtless the writer of these letters would have apologised for these details, and for some others, had he foreseen their publication.

21. Page 69, line 18.—This circumstance of the tub has been questioned on several grounds.

22. Page 89, line 4.—The identity of the Franks and Russians has been maintained by many learned men.

23. Page 106, line 23.—In a state of pain the reaction would be stronger, since the nature of the organised being impels it more especially towards that which ensures its comfort as well as its conservation.

24. Page 108, line 15.—Though expressed in a positive manner, all this must not be regarded as rigorously true.

25. Page 108, line 19.—There are men who are soured by fortune—those who, while in no wise wicked, are not those who are good.

26. Page 109, line 30.—Obscure or profound ideas suffer change with time, and we grow accustomed to their consideration under another aspect: when they begin to turn false the people begin to find that they are divine; when they are completely absurd, the people are ready to die for them.

27. Page 113, line 22.—(*Des chars ont versé*) the word *char* is not used in this sense in the greater part of France, where two-wheeled carts are more common. But in Switzerland, and in other places, the term is applied to light waggons and four-wheeled country coaches.

28. Page 125, line 30.—The acceptation of the term romantic has changed since these lines were written.

29. Page 128, line 19.—The harpsichord of colours was ingenious, that of scents would have been still more interesting.

30. Page 129, line 12.—Cowherds—*kuher* in German, *Armailli* in romance language, is the name given to the man who leads the kine to the mountains, passing the whole season in the high pastures, where he is employed in making cheeses. Generally, the Armaillis remain thus for four or five months in the high Alps, entirely separated from women and frequently from other men.

31. Page 129, line 33.—Many attempts have been made to set words to this shepherd march. One of them, in La Gruyère patois, contains forty-eight verses :—

> "The Armaillis of Columbette
> Rose up in the morning early," &c.

Another of these species of eclogues, composed, it is said, in the Appenzell, in the German language, finishes something like this: "Profound retreats, tranquil oblivion! O peace of men and places, peace of the valleys and the lakes! Free shepherds, obscure families, simple customs! Give unto our hearts the charm of the chalets and renunciation under the austere sky. Unconquerable mountains! Cold refuge! Last repose of a free and simple soul!"

32. Page 147, line 11.—Beccaria has argued very strongly against the penalty of death, but in this I am unable to agree with him. He maintains that the citizen, being incapable of alienating more than the smallest possible part of his liberty, is incapable of consenting to the loss of his life. He adds that, not having the right of self-destruction, he cannot cede to the city the right of killing him.

Only what is just and incontestable should, I conceive, be advanced when discussing the principles which are the basis of positive laws or of ethics. The attempt to sustain even the best things by merely specious reasoning is not without danger; one day, when the illusion comes to be destroyed, the truth itself is shaken which it served to uphold. True things have their real reason; those of an arbitrary

kind should not be sought. Had the moral and political legislation of antiquity been founded solely on evident principles, its power, less persuasive, it is true, in the earliest times, and less calculated to create enthusiasts, would have remained impregnable. Were there now an attempt to construct this edifice which has not as yet been erected, I confess that it might not prove useful until it had been cemented by the years; but this consideration in no sense destroys its beauty or dispenses with the obligation of undertaking it.

Obermann does nothing but doubt, suppose and dream; he scarcely reasons or thinks at all; he examines, but does not decide or establish anything. It may be admitted, if desired, that what he says amounts to nothing, but it might lead to a good deal. If in his own independent and unsystematic way, he follows notwithstanding some principle, it is above all that of seeking to say only what is true in favour even of truth, to admit nothing that will not be justified by all times, to refrain from confusing good intention with exactitude of demonstration, and not to think that it is indifferent by what way the best things are sought to be enforced. The history of so many religious and political sects has shown that rapid methods produce only ephemeral results. This way of looking has seemed to me of high importance, and it is chiefly for this reason that I publish these letters, so void in other respects and so vague.

33. Page 151, line 15.—I realise fully how much this letter is calculated to create scandal. I would state in advance that the mode of thinking on the same question at another age will be found subsequently. I have perused already the passage to which I refer: possibly it may no less scandalise than the present one; but it will give offence only to the same persons.

34. Page 159, line 24.—This has considerable analogy with a fact reported in a *Histoire des Voyages*. A Danish scientist was assured by a native of Iceland that he had frequently lighted his pipe at a stream of fire which flowed for nearly two years in that country.

35. Page 162, line 7.—The author does not state expressly what he understands here by religion, but it will be seen that his reference is especially to Western faiths.

36. Page 163, line 18.—Possibly by some more profound reflection which would lead to doubts more religious in their independence.

37. Page 168, line 2—There is, in effect, a substantial difference between confessing that some things are not to be explained by man and affirming that the inconceivable explanation of such things is just

and infallible. It is one thing to exclaim in the darkness: I do not see; and another to cry: I behold a divine light; you who follow me, refrain not only from saying that you do not discern it, but see it actually or be anathema.

38. Page 193, line 4.—"It is an imbecile presumption to disdain and set down as falsehood that which seems to us unlikely; but it is a common vice with those who regard themselves as possessed of some competence beyond the common. I did this kind of thing formerly . . . and now I find that I was at least as much to be pitied myself."—MONTAIGNE.

39. Page 196, line 7.—This opinion may be found in the fifty-seventh epistle of Seneca; it was common among the Stoics, and the considerations by which Seneca refutes it are not less remarkable.

40. Page 197, line 22.—It could scarcely have been the intention of Obermann to ridicule the sciences which he admired, though he did not possess them. Doubtless he wished only that the vast progress of modern times should not lead the semi-erudite to despise antiquity so inconsiderately.

41. Page 199, line 9.—In all sects the disciples, or the majority among them, are less great than their master. They disfigure his thought, above all when superstitious fanaticism or the passion for innovation are joined to intellectual errors. Pythagoras, like Jesus, wrote nothing; the pretended successors of both have well exhibited how they appreciated the whole advantage of this circumstance. Let us consider for a moment the question of number as it appears to have been understood by Pythagoras. If, from an elevated place commanding a wide prospect, we discern in the plain, between the high forests, some of those creatures who maintain an erect posture, and if we come to realise that it is they who fell the woodland, direct the course of the rivers, build pyramids, and change the face of the earth, we experience considerable astonishment. Time is their great instrument, and time is a series of numbers. Combinations, or sequences of numbers, make up all incidents, vicissitudes, combinations, all individual works of the universe. Force, organisation, space, order, duration, are numbers only. All the means of Nature follow from the properties of numbers, and the sum of these means is Nature herself; this harmony without bounds is the infinite principle by which all exists as it does. The genius of Pythagoras outvalues the minds that do not understand him. Pythagoras appears to have said that all things were made according to the properties of numbers, but not by their virtue. For the sayings of Porphyry, Nicomachus, &c., on the subject of numbers,

consult *De Mysteriis Numerorum* by Bungo. See also the Laws of Pythagoras, 2036, 2038 &c., in the "Travels of Pythagoras." Looking over this volume of ancient wisdom, these 3500 sentences called Laws of Pythagoras, it will be observed that the references to numbers are exceedingly few.

42. Page 202, line 1.—Apparently this period is anterior to the most recent among modern discoveries: for the rest, nine is, like seven, a sacred number. Four fragments do not exceed one whole.

43. Page 202, line 1.—As seven are essential, and as platinum cannot be excluded, mercury was rejected, which seems to have a special character and to differ in many of its properties from other metals, as, for example, by remaining in a state of fusion even at a degree of cold which was long thought to surpass the natural cold of our age. Unfortunately, modern chemistry recognises a greater number of metals; but, on the other hand, it is probable that there are forty-nine, which comes back to the same.

44. Page 202, line 1.—Linnæus divided vegetable odours into seven classes. De Saussure acknowledges an eighth, but it is clear that for the gamut there should be seven only.

45. Page 202, line 3.—The Greeks had seven vowels. French grammarians also recognise seven—the three E's and the four others.

46. Page 203, line 17.—The climacterics of Hippocrates are the seventh years—which is analogous to what has been said under the number seven.

47. Page 206, line 1.—The moon has at length been brought to a greater apparent proximity than the mountains which in certain climates can be seen perfectly by the naked eye though they are more than a day's journey distant.

48. Page 220, line 1.—In spite of his doubts, Obermann would be more in harmony with himself were it not for his youth.

49. Page 230, line 30.—A reference to letters that have been suppressed.

50. Page 236, line 2.—Freybourg, one of the free towns.

51. Page 239, line 19.—Our days, which nothing can recall, are made up of stormy moments which exalt and rend the soul; of protracted anxieties which fatigue, enervate and abase it; of indifferent periods

which detain it in repose if they are rare, and in weariness or effeminacy if they are frequent. There are also certain gleams of pleasure in the infancy of the heart. Peace is the portion of one man in ten thousand. As for happiness, we desire it, seek it, and wear ourselves out. It is true that we go on hoping for it, and might perhaps attain, if death or decrepitude did not arrive first. Life, all the same, is not generally hateful. It has amenities for the virtuous man; the one essential point is to impose on the heart the rest which the soul has preserved, supposing that it has preserved rectitude. We are afraid of parting with all our illusions; we wonder what will occupy our days. This is a mistake. The point at issue is not how to occupy the heart, but how to distract without misdirecting it; and, when hope exists no longer, a faint curiosity and a few habits remain to help us towards the end. These, in expectation of the night, prove sufficient; sleep, when we are not troubled, is natural.

52. Page 241, line 27.—The batz or batzen is about the seventh part of a livre.

53. Page 241, line 28.—See a note to Letter LXXXIX.

54. Page 245, line 16.—A small mountainous country, having customs peculiar to itself and an element of the unusual in its manners.

55. Page 252, line 11.—Melody, understood in the widest sense of which the term is capable, may also result from a sequence of colours or of odours, and indeed from any well-ordered sequence of given sensations, from every harmonious succession of those effects which have the property of stimulating within us what we exclusively denominate a sentiment.

56. Page 254, line 24.—The following remarks were appended to this letter:—

The Manual reminds me of some other fragments which were communicated to me by the same scholar. The object of his research seems rather to have been the discovery of things that were original, perhaps even fantastic, than those which were really valuable. I give the shortest of these strange bits of literature, or, if you prefer it, of philosophy. It is worthy your notice; it is even possible that the views of a dweller by the Danube are not far removed from the truth.

MOLDAVIAN FUNERAL CHANT.

Translated from the Slav.

"No sooner are we profoundly moved than we straightway dream of bidding farewell to earth. After one hour of delight, what better

can we look for? How can we imagine another morrow for great joys? Let us die, is the last hope of pleasure, the last word, the final cry of desire.

"If you would continue to live, restrain yourself, and thus delay your fall. To enjoy is to begin perishing; to deny oneself is to take precautions for living. Pleasure appears at the issue of things, at the one and the other limit. It communicates life and it inflicts death. Absolute pleasure is transformation.

"Man, after the manner of the child, diverts himself with a very little on the earth, but in the end his destination is to make choice among that which it offers. When his choices are finished, he desires to see death; this pastime so long dreaded can henceforth alone make impression upon him.

"Have you never desired death? If not, your experience of life is incomplete. But if your days are easy and voluptuous, if fortune pursues you with its favours, if you are at the highest pitch, then fall; death becomes your sole future.

"There is something attractive in drawing near to death, in retiring from it, in considering it afresh, until actually seizing upon it appears a potent delight. What beauty there is in the tempest because it promises death! The lightnings reveal the abyss, the thunder opens it.

"Where is there a greater object for curiosity, a more imperious need? For each one of us, according to his forces, the examination of the things of the world attains its limit, but behind death stretches the immense region, with all its light, or the perpetual darkness.

"The men of grand character, the men of genius, the men who are in the full strength of their prime, are those least dismayed by death. May it be because they do not believe in destruction, despite their independence, and that others do believe in it, in spite of their faith?

"Death is not evil, because it is universal. Evil is the exception to the supreme laws. Let us gather without bitterness that which is necessarily our heritage. Regarded as an accident, and, coming as a surprise, death may afflict; but it is consoling when it reaches us naturally.

"Let us wait and then let us die. If actual life is only a bondage, let it finish; if it leads to nothing, if it must be useless to have lived, let us be delivered from this false glimmer. Let us either die that we may really live or that we may cease from feigning to live.

"Death remains unknown—when we question it, it is not there; when it confronts us, when it strikes us, we have no longer the voice to question. Death keeps back one of the words of the universal enigma, a word which the earth will never hear."

Shall we condemn this dreamer of the Danube? Shall we relegate among the number of the fond vanities of the imagination every notion which is foreign to the frivolity from which the multitude has no wish to come out?

Perchance, in those moments when in country places an hour of slumber seems to begin, towards the noon of day, perchance you have experienced an indefinable impression, a felicitous consciousness of a life, quivering, so to speak, but yet more natural and free. All noises withdraw, all objects escape. A last thought presents itself with so much of truth that after this illusion, half-living, unforeseen and fugitive, there can be nothing, unless it be absolute oblivion or sudden awakening.

We should remark in particular of what these rapid images are then composed. Frequently a woman's form appears. The impression which she produces is not so much ordinary grace, continuous charm, or voluptuous hope; it is more than pleasure—it is the purity of the ideal; it is possession presented as a duty, as a simple fact, as a magnetic necessity. But the breast of that woman shows forth eloquently that she has the gift of nourishing. Thus is accomplished our mission. Without trouble and without regret it might be possible to die. To impart life, and then with closed eyes overstep the limits of the known world—such perchance is that which is here essential in our destination. All else is but an indifferent means of consuming the intervening minutes to arrive at the end.

I do not say that this trivial dream, in such moments as those of which we speak; that this abridged figure of life in the midst of the tranquil oblivion of things so numerous; that this peaceful and powerful emotion is the same among the majority of men. This I do not know, but doubtless it is not individual to me.

To transmit life and then lose it would be in the apparent order our chief office on earth. Nevertheless, let me ask whether there are no more dreams in the last sleep? Let me ask whether the law of death is really inflexible. Many of us have seen their intelligences grow stronger in some respects; might they not resist when others succumb?

57. Page 254, line 27.—There is no means of identifying this lake, but it is not that of Geneva. The beginning of the letter is missing, and I have suppressed the end.

58. Page 258, line 14.—The greatest difference without repulsive opposition, as the greatest similitude without insipid uniformity.

59. Page 259, line 10.—Our social industry has opposed the very men who should have been conciliated by true social art.

60. Page 260, line 30.—Some people parade their coldness as if it were the calm of wisdom; some claim the barren happiness of being inaccessible; they are like the blind man who believes himself better organised than the generality of people because blindness saves him from distractions.

61. Page 263, line 31.—Anything that is intended to exalt imagination, derange the mind, kindle the heart and forbid all reasoning, succeeds so much the more in proportion as it is combined with more austerity; but enduring institutions, temporal and civil laws, interior manners and all which allows of examination, are different from the impulse of fanaticism which prompts naturally to all that is difficult and to the veneration of all that is extraordinary. This essential distinction seems to have been forgotten. The multiplicity of affections and, in a sense, the incidents of the heart have been very well observed in man; but beyond this great advances still remain to be made.

62. Page 264, line 27.—It is in the things of love that aberration has become extreme among those nations which are possessed of morals, a term which we have come to apply exclusively to that which concerns love.

63. Page 265, line 9.—I have overstepped my editorial rights by pruning passages in a number of letters, and I have still left too many venturesome or useless portions. But such negligence would not be as excusable in a letter like the present; I have preserved this remark on marriage purposely, because I have not taken into consideration the general run of readers who alone would fail to perceive that it is not attacking either the utility of the marriage institution or even anything that is happy in a happy marriage.

64. Page 265, line 24.—"I shall not persuade her to be guilty of a fraud in my favour," the text of the letter continues. "I would indeed refuse it, and I should be doing nothing that was other than very simple, nothing which, for the thinking man, would be less than strict duty, the infraction of which would be degrading. No strength of desire, nor even any mutual passion, would furnish an excuse."

65. Page 266, line 6.—And also by timidity of sentiment. Two analogous but not identical things have been distinguished in every affection of our nature, namely, sentiment and appetite. The love of the heart occasions in sensitive men much embarrassment and reserve; sentiment is then more powerful than the direct craving. But, as there is no profound sensibility in an organisation which is interiorly weak,

he who feels thus in a veritable passion is no longer the same in love without passion; if he be then restrained, it is by his duties and in no sense by his timidity.

66. Page 267, line 2.—I have not yet found out the difference between the wretched creature who renders a woman with child only to forsake her and the soldier who, in the pillage of a war, violates and then murders one. The latter is possibly less infamous, for, in the first place, he does not deceive her, and, in the second, he is usually drunk.

67. Page 268, line 17.—It will most probably be objected that the vulgar man is incapable of thus investigating the ground of his duty, and, above all, of doing it impartially. But this difficulty is not very great in itself, and scarcely exists outside the present confusion of morals. Furthermore, in different institutions from our own there would not be minds perhaps so instructed as among us, but there would certainly not be a crowd so stupid, and, above all, so deceived.

68. Page 268, line 25.—I append an extract from the passages which I have removed from the text, and it will possibly be thought that I ought to have suppressed it altogether. My answer, both for this and for other instances, is that we may permit ourselves to speak openly when there is nothing in our thoughts which calls for concealment. I am responsible for what I publish. I have the courage to pronounce upon duties; if, in this respect, I can ever be upbraided with disloyalty to real duties, not only will I renounce judgment but liberty to write from that time forth.

"I should have very little confidence in a woman who did not realise the ground of her duties, who followed them strictly, blindly and from the instinct of prejudgment. Conduct of this kind may be safe, but it does not satisfy me. I have greater esteem for a woman who can be tempted by no consideration to betray him who trusts in her faith, and yet, in her natural liberty, bound by no promise and no serious attachment, and being in circumstances calculated to determine her in such a course, indulges with several men, be it even in the intoxication, the nudity, the refined madness of pleasure."

It is necessary to repeat that, outside additions designated as such, the present edition differs little from the first.

69. Page 272, line 29.—The stimulants of the Torrid Zone may have helped to age us. Their fires take less effect in India, where

is less; but European restlessness, excited by their fermentation, produces those disturbing and agitated men whose frenzy is regarded by the rest of the globe with an ever new astonishment. I do not say that in the present state of things it is not a relief for individuals, and even for a body of people, to experience this valorous and spiritual activity which finds in evil the pleasure of suffering gaily, and, in disorder, the burlesque side presented by all the things of life. While the man who clings to the object of his desires complains frequently of the sadness of life, he who makes no pretence of anything, but avoiding suffering, says rather that life is grotesque. To find that things are humorous is already to have found them less unhappy; it is still more when all contrarieties experienced are a source of amusement, and when danger itself is sought to find food for greater laughter. As to the French, should they ever possess Naples, they will make a ballroom in the crater of Vesuvius.

70. Page 274, line 27.—The good man is immovable in his severe virtue; the man of systems seeks after austere virtues.

71. Page 292, line 31.—Whether the vine has ever borne fruit in this valley is doubtful.

72. Page 300, line 33.—This can apply only to the thermometer of Fahrenheit. 145° above zero, or 113° above the natural freezing-point of water, corresponds to 50° and a fraction of the thermometer referred to Réaumur, and 130° below zero corresponds to 72° below freezing-point. 70° of frost is said to be not unparalleled at Nova Zembla; but I am not aware that 50° has been found even on the banks of the Gambia. The extreme heat of the Thebaïd is said to be 38°; and that of Guinea seems to be so much below 50° that I am not aware of it reaching that point anywhere, unless accidentally, as during the passage of the Samiel. There may also be some ground for questioning whether 70° of frost are registered in any habitable countries, though this is said to have been experienced at Jeniseick. Here is the result of some observations made in 1786. At Ostroug-Viliki, in the sixty-first degree, the mercury froze on Nov. 4. The Réaumur thermometer registered 31½°. On the morning of Dec. 1 it fell to 40°; to 51° on the same day; and on Dec. 7 to 60°. This seems to render probable a cold of 70°, whether in Nova Zembla or in the northernmost points of Russia, those which are nearest to the pole and yet are inhabited.

73. Page 301, line 27.—The familiar anecdote to which allusion is apparently made here has no authentic character.

74. Page 301, line 34.—Apparently an allusion to Democritus.

75. Page 305, line 2.—According to the thermometer of Réaumur.

76. Page 306, line 9.—It offers important facilities to the poet : he who would give expression to all that he imagines has a great advantage over him who may say only positive things, those only which he believes.

77. Page 306, line 34.—Yet a vague glimpse. This observation might here be even useless, but it is not so in general, and for the other passages to which it may be found applicable.

78. Page 309, line 8.—It is probable that the other parts of nature would also be obscure to our eyes. If in man we find more numerous subjects for astonishment, this is because we see more things in man. In the interior of beings, above all, we meet the limits of our conceptions everywhere. In a well-known object we feel that the unknown is joined to the known ; we see that we are on the brink of conceiving the rest, and that we do not conceive it notwithstanding.

79. Page 324, line 19.—Prior to the last Swiss Revolution.

80. Page 325, line 28.—The word *French* is too general.

81. Page 328, line 34.—O Eternal, Thou art admirable in the order of the worlds; but Thou art adorable in the expressive glance of the good man who breaks the bread which remains to him in the hand of his brother. These are, I believe, the very words of M., An. 2440.

82. Page 333, line 12.—An unsuitable expression except in this connection. I dislike it in its application to men of learning or to great writers ; but it answers for journalists, for those who follow the trade of literature, or at most those who are exactly and exclusively men of letters. A true magistrate is not a man of law. Montesquieu was not a man of letters ; many living authors also do not correspond to the description.

83. Page 334, line 34.—It is absurd and repulsive that such a person should presume to investigate principles and to search out the truth of virtues if he accepts as the rule of his own conduct the easy maxims of society and the false morals of convention. No man should take upon himself to instruct other men in their duties and in the moral reason of their actions unless he is imbued with the sentiment of order; unless he desires above all, not precisely public prosperity, but public felicity ;

unless the one end of his thought is to add to that obscure happiness, that welfare of the heart, source of all good, which the divagation of beings is unceasingly altering but which intelligence should restore and maintain unceasingly. Whoever is possessed of other passions and does not subjugate to this idea every human affection, whoever goes seriously in search of honours, possessions, of love even, or glory, is not born for the august office of a lawgiver to men.

He who preaches a religion without inwardly following it, without venerating therein the supreme law of his heart, is a despicable impostor. Do not cherish resentment against him, do not hate him personally, but let his duplicity arouse your indignation, and, if it be necessary, in order that he may no longer corrupt the human heart, cover him with opprobrium.

He who without personally subjecting his tastes, his desires, and all his views, to order and to moral equity, dares speak of morality to man—to man who like himself has the natural egotism of the individual and the weakness of the mortal—he is a still more detestable impostor; he degrades things that are elevated, he takes away all that remains to us. If possessed of the passion for scribbling, let him compose stories, let him manufacture small verses; if he has the writing talent, let him translate, let him become a man of letters, let him honour the arts and be useful after his own manner, let him work to win money or reputation; or, if more disinterested, let him work for the honour of some corporate body, for the advancement of the sciences, for the renown of his country. But let him leave to the good man that which is called the vocation of the sages, and to the preacher the profession of the moralist.

Printing has accomplished a great change in the social world. It was impossible that its influence should be altogether devoid of evil, but it could scarcely cause less. The resulting inconveniences have been realised, but the means employed to put a check upon them have produced others which are not less grave. It seems, nevertheless, that, in the actual state of things throughout Europe, it might be possible to conciliate both liberty of writing and the means of separating from the usefulness of books those excesses which tend to counterbalance that admitted utility. The evil results chiefly from the extravagance of party spirit and from the astonishing number of books that contain nothing. Time, it will be said, allows that which is unjust or evil to pass into oblivion. That is far from being sufficient, whether for individuals or for the public itself. The author is dead when opinion is formed or rectified, and the public acquires a fatal spirit of indifference for the true and honest in the midst of that incertitude from which it issues almost invariably concerning things that are past, but into which it re-

enters always invariably as regards present things. According to my supposition, it would be permissible to write anything that is now permissible, and opinion itself would be as free; but those who are unwilling to wait for half a century, those who cannot trust to themselves, or who object to reading twenty volumes in order to meet with a book, would find an indirect guarantee, a beaten way equally convenient and useful, while at the same time nothing would absolutely oblige them to follow it. Such an institution would exact the most strict impartiality, yet nothing would hinder writing against that which it approved; thus its most direct interest would be to deserve the public consideration which it would have no opportunity of enslaving. It is always objected that just men are too uncommon. I do not know whether they are so rare as is pretended, but one thing at least is untrue—that there are no just men.

84. Page 335, line 24.—Thus the "Spirit of Laws" was preceded by the "Persian Letters."

85. Page 338, line 7.—In the letters of a certain Matthew the following passage has struck me as curious: "It is a necessary consequence of the extent of the degradation into which the human species has fallen, and of the actual state of society in general, that there are many institutions equally incompatible with Christianity and morality." —*Voyage to Sierra Leone.*

86. Page 340, line 2.—I have suppressed certain pages having reference to particular circumstances, and to a person who is mentioned nowhere else in these letters. I have, in some sense, substituted what follows; it is a fragment drawn from elsewhere which expresses much the same points in a general manner, and its analogy with the portion which I have omitted has led me to place it here.

87. Page 347, line 26.—It is certain that the estrangement of Obermann from doctrines which he deemed to be all accidental did not extend to fundamental religious conceptions.

88. Page 362, line 28.—It will be seen that the word magic must here be understood in its first sense, and not in the later acceptation; so that by false magic we must practically understand the
the moderns.

89. Page 362, line 31.—B(oulanger) died at thirty-s
age, and was the author of "Antiquity Unveiled."

90. Page 367, line 3.—This is the sense of the maxim of Solon and of the passage from *De Officiis*, which have apparently occasioned the reference to Cicero and Solon.

91. Page 381, line 24.—Days full of sadness, the dreaming mood of the restricted soul, the long weariness which perpetuates the sentiment of the nothingness of life, may stimulate or feed the desire of finding an expression for thought; they are often favourable to writings, the poetry of which expresses the depths of feeling and the vast conceptions of the human soul, rendered impenetrable and, as it were, infinite by its sorrows. But a work which is important by its object, its scheme, and its extent, a work consecrated to men, and destined to live, should be undertaken only when the way of life is practically assured and when there is no anxiety as to what may befall those who are near to us. As for Obermann, he was alone, and I do not see that the favourable situation in which he now finds himself was really indispensable.

92. Page 385, line 12.—That which in France is impracticable is permissible still in almost the whole of Switzerland. It is there an accepted thing to meet of an evening at houses which are nothing more than select taverns. Neither age, nor nobility, nor yet the chief magistracy make an exception to this rule.

93. Page 386, line 34.—It would seem that this letter was designed to terminate as follows: "When the dream of the amiable and honourable grows stale in our vacillating thought; when the image of harmony, descending from the heavenly places, draws nigh to earth, only to find itself shrouded in mists and darkness; when nothing survives either of our affections or our hopes; when we pass with the unceasing flux of things and in the inevitable instability of the world! My friends! She whom I have lost; you who dwell far from my side! How can I find joy in this gift of existence? What is that which in reality sustains us? What are we? Sad blend of blind matter and free thought, of hope and of bondage; impelled by a breath unseen, in despite of our murmurs; grovelling, in sight of the splendours of space, upon a defiled earth, and rolled like insects in the miry ways of life; yet, even until the last fall, dreaming of the pure delights of a sublime destiny."

94. Page 387, line 1.—The materials of this Supplement were collected only about the year 1833, the period of the second edition, or subsequently.

95. Page 395, line 17.—This letter of Obermann, which came to hand since the preceding edition, has already been printed in "The Navigators."

96. Page 402, line 17.—At this period Obermann had possibly taken leave of Imenstrôm. Possibly, also, without being compelled to return to the cities, he regretted the rural life of the great pastures, which in the Northern and the High Alps are often very picturesque in their situations. There is, however, but one harvest, and the same thing is done all the year round.

THE END

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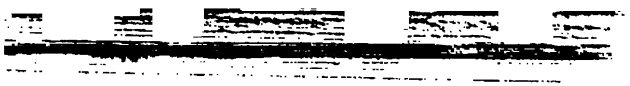

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